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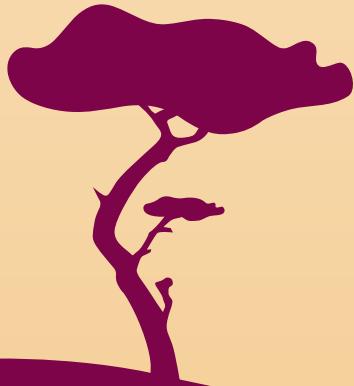
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# Advancing Stability and Reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau: Lessons from Africa's First Narco-State

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Davin O'Regan and Peter Thompson

June 2013



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## **The Africa Center for Strategic Studies**

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# **Advancing Stability and Reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau: Lessons from Africa's First Narco-State**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A string of crises stretching back more than a decade has rendered Guinea-Bissau one of the most fragile states in Africa. This recurring cycle of political violence, instability, and incapacitated governance, moreover, has accelerated in recent years, most notably following a military coup in April 2012. Exploiting this volatility, trafficking networks have coopted key political and military leaders and transformed Guinea-Bissau into a hub for illicit commerce, particularly the multibillion dollar international trade in cocaine. This has directly contributed to instability in Senegal, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa. European and African organized criminal groups have likewise established ties to the Guinea-Bissau trade. Drawn by the lucrative revenues, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other militant groups in West Africa have also been linked to Guinea-Bissau trafficking. Now commonly referred to as Africa's first narco-state, Guinea-Bissau has become a regional crossroads of instability.

Responses to Guinea-Bissau's bouts of crises, however, have tended to be short lived and neglect the country's deep institutional weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Clashes within the military, coups d'état, and strings of politically motivated killings have been met with condemnation from regional and international partners followed by calls for investigations or a transitional election—but with few genuine reforms. Oftentimes many of the perpetrators of Guinea-Bissau's crises retain or even expand their influence and stature. Meanwhile, economic growth has been episodic, human development indicators have been stagnant, and a humanitarian emergency imperiling 300,000 people looms. Given the sensational nature of these crises, root drivers of instability are consistently overlooked, including a political system marked by the concentration of authority in the executive branch and a security sector that has gradually expanded its involvement in politics. As a result, crises inevitably reemerge. While narcotics traffickers initially targeted Guinea-Bissau because of its weak oversight and governance capacity, the drug trade has dramatically compounded these drivers of instability while spawning others.

Despite Guinea-Bissau's serious challenges, some groundwork for reform has been laid by the country's emerging civil society actors and democratic institutions. An independent media sector, several prominent and well-organized human rights groups, an improved police force, and a national legislature that has on occasion demonstrated its influence, represent a potentially vital reform network. These civil society actors and independent reformers are under growing pressure from the increasingly emboldened military and political leadership that has captured escalating trafficking revenues, however.

At the heart of Guinea-Bissau's instability is its winner-take-all political system. To break its cycle of violence and instability, Guinea-Bissau will need to institute stronger checks and balances in order to diminish the concentration of authority in the Office of the President. This includes codifying the role of other branches of government in authorizing public expenditures and government appointments, among other responsibilities. The armed forces will also need to undergo an objective and balanced

review of its management and mission. To become a constructive actor, this top-heavy institution will need to upgrade its policies of promotion, retirement, and recruitment to create a more dynamic, ethnically balanced, and threat-based force structure. Stabilization will similarly require protecting civil society actors as they represent the drivers for change internally. Institutional reforms in the political and military spheres will be contingent on reconciliation efforts to bridge entrenched inter-elite and state-society rifts following years of unresolved abuses, coups, killings, and political machinations.

Given the level of polarization within Guinea-Bissau, stabilization cannot be achieved through domestic efforts alone. Instead, it will require the sustained engagement of international partners. Moreover, while Guinea-Bissau is frequently perceived as solely a domestic challenge, its instability is part of a transnational criminal threat affecting regional and international security. As such, neighboring states, as well as Europe and the United States have vested interests in a stable Guinea-Bissau. To advance this objective, international partners should expand their efforts to detect and interdict the sea and air traffic conveying bulk drug shipments to Africa via Guinea-Bissau. Additionally, international actors should investigate and prosecute trafficking networks, many of which clearly hold assets and operational bases in jurisdictions well beyond Guinea-Bissau. Countering trafficking within Guinea-Bissau will require capable multinational engagement to reconstitute the judicial sector, law enforcement, and associated legal and regulatory frameworks. Such an effort could be modeled on a unique joint United Nations-Guatemalan initiative to combat organized criminal activity and strengthen government counter-crime capacities.

Efforts to stabilize Guinea-Bissau hold numerous insights on preventing and reversing the rise of other narco-states in Africa. This is an increasingly real prospect given the growing levels of cocaine, heroin, and amphetamine trafficking on the continent. Guinea-Bissau may be Africa's first narco-state, but worrying signs in Mali, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, and elsewhere indicate that it is not the only country struggling against the hollowing effects of drug trafficking on security, development, and governance.

## A WORSENING CYCLE OF CRISES AND REGIONAL SPILLOVER

No elected president has ever completed a term in office. All but one have been deposed by the military, including a coup d'état in the midst of national elections in April 2012. One was assassinated by soldiers in 2009. Among the previous five chiefs of staff of the armed forces, three were murdered and one was forcibly exiled by a rival officer. A former head of the navy was arrested in international waters and the chief of staff of the armed forces indicted by U.S. authorities following a drug sting operation in April 2013. In short, Guinea-Bissau has lurched from crisis to crisis since the 1990s.

Such civil-military intrigue has steadily worsened in recent years. Activists, business leaders, political candidates, journalists, some military officers, and other prominent individuals have been detained, brutally beaten, exiled, or killed under mysterious circumstances. Draconian restrictions were imposed by the transitional authorities following the April 2012 military coup, including a ban on public demonstrations and discussion of the coup or previous unsolved assassinations.<sup>1</sup> Indicative of the deterioration in the rule of law, when disputes or fighting erupts, many civilian leaders immediately flee to foreign embassies to avoid arrest. The military, meanwhile, is increasingly fragmented. In October 2012, several soldiers were killed during what the military alleged was an attempted countercoup. Days later, a senior officer presumed to have been exiled in Portugal was arrested near Bissau and, along with other military figures, eventually sentenced by military tribunal to several years in prison for masterminding the attack. Rival troop factions fought street battles in late December 2011. Such deepening fragmentation in the armed forces has become a major driver of Guinea-Bissau's persistent political crises.

Accelerating this disarray is competition for control of the lucrative flow of cocaine through Guinea-Bissau. First emerging in the mid-2000s, narcotics trafficking has steadily worsened, with indications that large shipments arrived on a weekly or biweekly basis in 2012<sup>2</sup> and that at least 25 tons of cocaine entered the country from April to July of that year.<sup>3</sup> In other words, more than half the total annual cocaine flow previously estimated to be trafficked through the entire West African region transited Guinea-Bissau in less than 4 months. These rising drug flows, which may rival the value of Guinea-Bissau's entire economy,<sup>4</sup> have severely impacted the country's governance and security. Today, the country is widely described as Africa's first narco-state.

Instability, meanwhile, has sidetracked meaningful development progress in Guinea-Bissau. Between 1980 and 2012, the country averaged an anemic 0.4 percent rate of annual economic growth. In 30 years, real per capita income rose just 5 percent, from \$158 to \$166 a year. Infant mortality remains 40 percent higher than the Sub-Saharan African average. Indicative of the breakdown in state institutions and basic services, numerous other data on school enrollment, government expenditures, and other key measures of development performance have not been regularly collected since the early 2000s.

Since the coup d'état of 2012, the situation has grown more precarious for Bissau-Guineans. The economy shrank 2.5 percent in 2012. The vital cashew nut industry, which employs 80 percent of the workforce, saw a 50 percent fall in exports. The shock to the economy largely reflected the contraction of government activity following the coup—a situation that never fully returned to normal. The closure of banks and money transfer agencies frustrated many buyers and traders. Some prominent buyers became fearful of even travelling to Guinea-Bissau.<sup>5</sup> Displacement following the coup, moreover, disrupted the April-June harvest season. The instability caused by the coup simultaneously led to a near doubling in the price of rice, the country's staple grain, two-thirds of which must be imported. Forced to spend more of their already limited funds on food, farmers were less able to purchase inputs for the new season, perpetuating the cycle.<sup>6</sup> In short, the coup sent an already fragile economy into a tailspin. In March 2013, the World Food Program (WFP) issued its first appeal in years for emergency food aid to Guinea-Bissau—for nearly 300,000 people.<sup>7</sup>

The lack of opportunity in the country also alters the stakes of the country's political disputes. With so few avenues through which to earn income, competition for office—and the resources that come with it—becomes more critical. Likewise, alternatives to a position in the military and the influence this affords are limited, fueling tensions and competition within the armed forces. For even those in power, managing supporters and patronage networks can be difficult amid such minimal growth. As a result, other "self-financing mechanisms," such as arms and drug trafficking, become increasingly compelling.

Guinea-Bissau is often overlooked in a region with many other security challenges. Yet while it is a small country of just 1.6 million people, its recurring instability, especially its pivotal role in the drug trade, has had significant and worsening consequences across West and North Africa. For example, a Boeing 727 jet believed to have been transporting several tons of cocaine found crashed in the desert near the northern Malian city of Gao in November 2009 had been registered in Guinea-Bissau to a Senegalese business.<sup>8</sup> Given a 727's flight range and the distance from its presumed departure point in Venezuela, the aircraft would have been unable to make the trip to Mali without landing first in Guinea-Bissau or another West African coastal state. Likewise, the length of trafficking routes into and through West Africa inevitably mean that the increasingly numerous shipments arriving in Guinea-Bissau must move through neighboring West African countries before reaching their final destinations in Europe. With the increase in trafficking, attendant criminality also spreads. Money tied to the drug trade must find channels for laundering, which often means buying property in Senegal or The Gambia, bartering for gold, diamonds, and other commodities in Liberia, or investing in dodgy and unproductive businesses elsewhere, which crowds legitimate entrepreneurs out of the market.

A 30-year-old insurgency in Casamance, the southern-most region of Senegal, also has strong links in neighboring Guinea-Bissau. Senegal's rebels and elements of Guinea-Bissau's military and political elite have fought side by side and against one another during previous conflicts. Islamic militant groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other African organized criminal groups have also exploited Guinea-Bissau's instability to facilitate their activities. Two members of AQIM were

seized at an upscale hotel in Bissau in early 2008 where they were hiding following the killings of four French tourists in Mauritania in December 2007. Scattered reports have also suggested AQIM members may have visited Bissau to coordinate trans-Sahel drug trafficking with Latin American criminal networks.<sup>9</sup> Nigerian criminal syndicates, similarly, have benefited extensively from Guinea-Bissau's weak government oversight. The large Lebanese community in Bissau has spurred concerns of the presence of Hezbollah,<sup>10</sup> which has been active in the cocaine trade in Benin, Nigeria, and elsewhere in West Africa. Organized criminal groups in Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom, among others, have also had a hand in Guinea-Bissau's trafficking networks.



Source: CIA World Factbook. Modified by author.

As evidence of heroin, cocaine, and amphetamine trafficking expands in Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, South Africa, and other African states, lessons from Guinea-Bissau hold important insights for what appears to be a worsening problem across the continent.

Guinea-Bissau's instability has long been minimized or deemed an isolated phenomenon. In the process, its problems have metastasized. The country's endless string of disputes, coups d'état, and political crises now pose a persistent threat to regional stability. However, the drivers of instability in Guinea-Bissau run deeper than the latest crisis of the moment. There are complex, long-running issues that need to be confronted to break Guinea-Bissau's cycle of instability and the regional threat it poses. Three interwoven trends within the country stand out: the politicization of the armed forces, winner-take-all battles for the presidency, and the influence of illicit trafficking. Meanwhile, new challenges are emerging that further fuel and complicate reform efforts, including ethnic cleavages within the military as well as competing interests among international actors engaged in the country. Together, these overarching issues are compounding Guinea-Bissau's stabilization challenge.

## POLITICIZATION OF THE MILITARY

Civil-military relations in Guinea-Bissau have deteriorated significantly over the last decade, resulting in the steady expansion of political meddling by military officers, fragmentation within the armed forces, and a shattered military professional ethos.

The military and its troops were once widely respected in Guinea-Bissau. The People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP), as it is still known today, fought from 1963 until 1974 in a frequently brutal war of independence against Portuguese rule. In the 1998-1999 civil war, military mobilization swelled three-fold as it rose up and ultimately exiled the unpopular authoritarian President João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira. In a nation that had endured years of post-independence stagnation, authoritarianism, and instability, the military was repeatedly celebrated as liberators.

This mentality became deeply engrained within Bissau-Guinean society, particularly among leading military officers. It contributed to a growing sense of military entitlement to shape the country and its politics. Written in 1984 and last revised in 1996, the constitution's treatment of the military is emblematic of this perception. The document not only addresses the military as an institution within the state's architecture, but also it singles out certain members of the military who deserve special perquisites and accolades above and beyond those allotted to the military as a whole. Under the constitution's "Fundamental Principles," Article 5 "proclaims [Guinea-Bissau's] eternal gratitude to those fighters who, through their voluntary sacrifice, guaranteed the liberation of the Homeland from foreign domination, by re-winning national dignity and our people's right to freedom, progress, and peace." It further states that these "freedom fighters," who are constitutionally entitled to certain benefits for their contributions, are those militants who were registered when the liberation movement was formed on September 19, 1956, 10

years before the FARP, through September 24, 1973, just months before the country secured its independence from Portugal.

In fact, most of its leading officers still meet the constitution's qualifications of a "freedom fighter," 40 years after the liberation war ended. As a whole, then, Guinea-Bissau's military is old, top heavy, over-sized, and suffers from institutional sclerosis. Even after a demobilization campaign following the 1998-1999 civil war reduced the armed forces by roughly half, the military's troop-to-population ratio remains double the West African average. According to a 2008 study (see Table 1), more than half the army is over the age of 40, and 45 percent of all active duty members have more than 20 years of service. Personnel are heavily concentrated in the capital, with 70 percent based in Bissau. There are twice as many senior officers in the armed forces as there are rank and file troops. In other words, the armed forces is less a dynamic and mission-focused institution serving the state than an exclusive club of aging individuals that frequently operates for their personal interests. Merit, performance, and leadership have far less impact than loyalty, seniority, and patronage on promotional advancement.

These institutional shortcomings have contributed to a worsening tendency of the military to interfere in the country's politics. A milestone of these altered civil-military relations was Guinea-Bissau's 1998-1999 civil war. Then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces General Asumane Mané launched the conflict in 1998 after he had been sacked by then President Vieira for allegedly trafficking arms to support Le Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), a rebel group in Senegal. (It later emerged that Vieira was also involved in arms trafficking). Vieira had miscalculated, though, and only curried minimal support from the armed forces and population. He was forced to rely on 2,000 troops quickly deployed by neighboring Senegal and Guinea after Mané launched the conflict. With most of the country behind him, Mané eventually emerged victorious in 1999, and Vieira fled to Portugal. Civil-military relations in Guinea-Bissau have been in decline ever since.

After the civil war, elections for parliament and the presidency were held in 1999 and 2000, respectively, and General Mané did not stand as a candidate. However, it became apparent Mané was reluctant to relinquish his newfound role as kingmaker, which might insulate the military from any future domineering civilian leaders. Not long after the presidential elections in 2000, a sign was erected above Mané's offices declaring him "co-president." He ignored or refused measures by the new civilian government to promote or shift troops and officers. Meanwhile, loyalty to Mané within the military began to fray as Mané became more deeply involved in politics. Some members of the armed forces sided with newly elected President Kumba Ialá, who had tried to consolidate his authority among the rank and file by favoring his fellow ethnic Balanta. Ialá ordered Mané arrested for subverting his authority, and Mané was killed in November 2000 by soldiers loyal to Mané's successor, military Chief of Staff General Veríssimo Correia Seabra.

Since Mané, other officers have delved ever more deeply into politics. In 2003, General Seabra overthrew the increasingly unpopular and erratic President Kumba Ialá, who was blamed for a widely dysfunctional

government and economic crisis. Like Mané, Seabra oversaw a return to civilian rule and elections, but fragmentation within the armed forces worsened as groups began to align behind different senior officers and military factions. Seabra was a victim of this deterioration when he was killed in a revolt in 2004. General Batista Tagme Na Wai rose to the top military post after Seabra's death. Na Wai's selection, which was largely determined by military elites as opposed to the civilian government, was a sign of how contentious things had become in the upper ranks of the military. He was a member of former President Ialá's ethnic group, the Balanta, but many of his deputies and newly promoted officers were closely aligned with former President Vieira in a delicate effort to balance competing groups in the armed forces and civilian political class.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1. Demographic Composition of the Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau**

		Proportion of Total (%)
Rank	Officers	42%
	Noncom Officers & Corporals	38%
	Rank and File	20%
Services	Army	86%
	Air Force	4%
	Navy	10%
Age	20 or younger	0.1%
	20-40	44%
	40-60	51%
	Over 60	5%
Length of Service	Less than 5 Years	33%
	5-20 Years	23%
	20-30 Years	20%
	More than 30 Years	25%

*Source:* Results of a 2008 study commissioned by the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.<sup>11</sup>

Civil-military relations continued to worsen. General Na Wai had an extremely antagonistic relationship with President Vieira, who had returned from exile and narrowly won a second-round presidential vote in 2005 as an independent candidate. For instance, one soldier was killed when so-called mutinous troops attacked the presidential palace in November 2008,<sup>13</sup> and General Na Wai survived “accidental” gunfire directed at his motorcade by members of Vieira’s security detail.<sup>14</sup> It was assumed that such incidents were orchestrated by each side. On March 1, 2009, Na Wai was killed in a bombing. Hours later, troops loyal to Na Wai stormed the presidential residence, tortured, and fatally shot Vieira. Later it was reported that the device used to kill Na Wai was more sophisticated than anything previously seen in Guinea-Bissau. The explosive may have originated in Thailand, leading to suggestions that Latin American drug cartels had sponsored a connection between Na Wai’s rivals in Bissau and high-profile weapons traffickers.<sup>15</sup>

Na Wai's successor was Vice Admiral José Zamora Induta, a deputy under General Mané during the civil war. Induta was in office for just a year when without explanation on April 1, 2010, his deputy, General António Indjai, arrested him, other military officers, and then prime minister and presidential aspirant, Carlos Gomes Jr. The latter, in particular, had been a strong supporter of Indjai's rivals within the military and was advancing robust changes within the security sector. Indjai declared himself military chief of staff. Ultimately, Gomes Jr. was released under intense pressure from large public demonstrations, influential civil society leaders, and international partners. Vice Admiral Induta and another officer were detained for 8 months without charge.

Tensions and mistrust between Indjai and Gomes Jr., however, only deepened. In April 2012, Indjai arrested Gomes Jr. again as the latter seemed poised for a second-round runoff victory in presidential elections. This time, however, Indjai did not back down. Indjai asserted that Gomes Jr. was collaborating with Angola, which had deployed several hundred troops as part of a military technical assistance mission in Guinea-Bissau. Indjai was skeptical of the Angolan mission, which he saw as aimed at undermining the Bissau-Guinean armed forces and consolidating its influence in the country. More importantly, if elected president, Gomes Jr., given his considerable political influence, would have been much more able to sideline Indjai. Guinea-Bissau's neighbors and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) pressured General Indjai to relent, and Gomes Jr. and others were eventually allowed to leave the country and have since lived in exile in Portugal. Notably, some senior officers were killed just before the April 2012 coup d'état and others were arrested. Vice Admiral Induta, the former military chief of staff who had been detained by General Indjai's forces for most of 2010, fled through Casamance to The Gambia where he departed for Portugal. In other words, factions within the military were purged and forced aside during the coup. Though a transitional civilian government ostensibly soon took over, Indjai remained the most powerful individual in the country and in a position to shape the civilian political arena.

The trend that began with General Mané and persists today reflects the steady politicization of the armed forces. Mané's initial intentions appeared comparatively moderate. Having been personally targeted by the previous political leadership and having endured a yearlong civil war, he sought to isolate the military from the political process and reserve the authority to selectively stifle certain policies or civilian leaders. His successors and many other military leaders have sought to broaden these powers. General Na Wai publicly contravened official policy and had parliamentarians and politicians detained on several occasions. General Indjai once threatened to kill Prime Minister Gomes Jr. at a news conference. As chief of staff of the armed forces, Indjai claimed substantial new powers for himself, including responsibility for recruitment, promotions, defense budgeting and spending, and the national defense strategy—changes that were codified in new laws passed in 2011.<sup>16</sup> Given that the defense sector has accounted for at least 30 percent of the government budget in recent years, such authorities provide military leaders enormous influence.

The expanding politicization of the armed forces has upended Guinea-Bissau's weak system of institutional

checks and balances as well as the more formidable but unofficial balance of power among different groupings of influential elites. Bouts of instability in the form of high-profile assassinations, coup attempts, and military takeovers have grown more recurrent (see timeline on pages 26–27). Given the exclusivity of its officer corps and the institutional sclerosis in the armed forces, this steady politicization of the military has prompted infighting and factionalism within the security sector itself. In order to advance one's career, soldiers must ally themselves with a strongman. Inevitably, power plays, competition, and internal strife within the military have grown more common, fueling a worsening cycle of instability.

## WINNER TAKE ALL

Competition for the Office of the President has characterized much of Guinea-Bissau's history. This tension is a structural feature of Guinea-Bissau's political system, whereby a disproportionate concentration of power resides in the presidency. Individuals aligned with the president gain access to financial opportunities and career advances unavailable to the general population. Outsiders are also subject to intimidation and the arbitrary application of the law.

This practice is partly a legacy of President João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira, Guinea-Bissau's long-serving authoritarian leader who was president following a coup d'état in 1980 until the end of a civil war in 1999, and again after returning from exile in 2005 until his assassination in 2009. His statutory authority as well as his style of leadership centralized power in the presidency, and he exercised it to the fullest extent to empower allies, reward supporters, and sideline or punish enemies, whether real, emerging, or merely perceived. Shuffles were a common strategy to extend and retain power and influence.

Guinea-Bissau features a hybrid or “semi-presidential” political system, with both a president and a prime minister. According to the constitution, the Office of the President has wide powers, including the ability to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, the head of the armed forces, the attorney general, and other ministers. The president can also create new government ministries and offices, swear in judges, and issue certain decrees and laws. In practice, the Office of the President has exercised many other powers. Following presidential elections, victors have thoroughly restaffed ministries, regional and local governments, the judiciary, and sections of the armed forces. Even following the coup d'état in April 2012, the transitional civilian administration, contravening promises to ECOWAS and United Nations (UN) representatives, shuffled political appointments throughout the government and placed members of the theretofore leading opposition Party of Social Renewal (PRS) in power.<sup>17</sup>

All together, the constitutional powers of the office, Guinea-Bissau's limited experience with democratic governance, and Vieira's lengthy time in power have imbued the presidency with outsized influence. As a result, elections have become points of fierce competition. Even following closely contested elections, which would ordinarily lead to some sort of power-sharing accommodation, victors have asserted the same sweeping authority. This has marginalized losing candidates and their parties while further fueling a dangerous and conflict-prone winner-take-all perception of the Office of the President.

That said, incremental improvements to Guinea-Bissau's political system have been periodically realized (see text box on page 14). In response to economic pressure, calls for political reform from international partners in the post-Cold War democratization wave, and internal opposition to Vieira's authoritarian rule, multipartyism was introduced in Guinea-Bissau in 1990, leading to a more dynamic political environment. Nonetheless, Vieira was able to leverage his extensive networks throughout the government and economy to win the country's first multiparty presidential elections in 1994, though only by a narrow margin in a second-round runoff vote. His dominance, and that of the presidency, persisted during this early democratic transition.

Lacking other established democratic checks and balances, by the mid-1990s, a crisis began to simmer and eventually exploded into the country's destructive 1998-1999 civil war. The MFDC rebel movement in the south of Senegal had grown increasingly active in the mid-1990s attacking Senegalese forces. Senegal attributed this to the flow of illicit arms through Guinea-Bissau and pressured Vieira to do something. Seeking to satisfy an ally and simultaneously sideline his rival, Vieira attempted to dismiss Mané as chief of staff of the armed forces, citing evidence of Mané's ties to arms trafficking and the MFDC. In fact, a parliamentary investigation scheduled to be released just days after Mané's dismissal indicated that both Vieira and Mané were profiting from illicit arms trafficking. General Mané refused to obey the order and with the help of most of the armed forces seized several military facilities in the first maneuvers of what would be an 11-month civil war leading to Vieira's flight to Portugal and Mané taking control of Bissau in May 1999.

Surprisingly, a transition to civilian rule was relatively rapid and multiparty elections were held in late 1999. Many members of the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) were ousted as new opposition parties were elected to parliament. Bissau-Guineans elected Kumba Ialá, the head of the opposition PRS, as president with 39 percent of the vote in the first-round and 72 percent in the second-round runoff. It was the first alternation of power in Guinea-Bissau, something many other stable African states have yet to realize. Reflective of the degree of political competition, the PRS was not able to command a majority in the legislature and was forced to form a coalition with another opposition party to form a government. In fact, this arrangement largely reflects Guinea-Bissau's voting record since multipartyism was introduced two decades ago. Every presidential race since 1994 has gone to a runoff, most of which have been decided by narrow margins and few legislative elections have delivered an absolute majority to one party (see Tables 2 and 3).

Unfortunately, like Vieira before him, Ialá attempted to exceed the authority of his office. His supporters were quickly appointed to positions throughout the government, from national to local levels. Ialá regularly dismissed those who disagreed with him, including key members of his government and several judges of the Supreme Court. Ialá also clashed with the military brass when he attempted to sideline some officers and grant promotions to others (primarily on the basis of ethnicity). It was Ialá loyalists in the military who ultimately killed General Asumane Mané as they attempted to arrest him in November 2000. In late 2002, Ialá dissolved the National Assembly. By 2003, Ialá was a president

without a prime minister or legislature, was continuously delaying elections, and facing protests over back salaries for civil servants and poor services.<sup>18</sup> Such erratic and destructive leadership caught up with him. Mané's successor as military chief of staff, General Veríssimo Correia Seabra, deposed Ialá amid an acute political and economic crisis in September 2003.

Remarkably, Vieira returned from exile and won presidential elections as an independent candidate in 2005. His victory was not resounding, however. He defeated the PAIGC candidate, who had won the

**Table 2. Results of Guinea-Bissau's Presidential Elections**

Round 1	Candidates & Results	Round 2	Candidates & Results
March 2012	Carlos Gomes Jr. (PAIGC) – 49%	April 2012	Never held following military coup d'état.
	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 23.4%		
	Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo (Indep.) – 15.7%		
	Henrique Pereira Rosa (Indep.) – 5.4%		
June 2009	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC) – 37.5%	July 2009	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC) – 63.3%
	Henrique Pereira Rosa (Alliance) – 22.9%		Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 36.7%
	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 27.9%		
June 2005	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC) – 35.5%	July 2005	João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira (Indep.) – 52.3%
	João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira (Indep.) – 28.9%		Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC) – 47.7%
	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 25%		
November 1999	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 38.8%	January 2000	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 72%
	Malam Bacai Sanha (PAIGC) – 23.4%		Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC) – 28%
	Faustino Imbali – 8.2%		
	Fernando Gomes – 7%		
July 1994	João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira (PAIGC) – 46.2%	August 1994	João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira (PAIGC) – 52%
	Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 21.8%		
	Domingos Fernandes (RGB-MB) – 17.4%		
	Carlos Gomes (Indep.) – 5.1%		Kumba Ialá (PRS) – 48%

Sources: IFES Election Guide, Africa Elections Database, and various news reports.

first-round vote, by a narrow margin in a second-round runoff. Vital to his victory, Vieira had negotiated a rapprochement with Kumba Ialá, whose PRS party retained substantial support of the ethnic Balanta community, which comprises roughly a quarter of the population. Once back in power, Vieira quickly reverted to the manipulative use of his authority and strained relations with military leaders, particularly Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces General Batista Tagme Na Wai, who had replaced General Seabra after he had been killed in a 2004 revolt. Meanwhile, Carlos Gomes Jr. of the PAIGC had risen to become prime minister and soon clashed with Vieira. Vieira's subsequent dismissal of Carlos Gomes Jr.

**Table 3. Results of Guinea-Bissau's Legislative Elections**

Date of Elections	Number of Seats Won	Percentage of Total Votes
November 2008	PAIGC – 67	49.5
	PRS – 28	25.2
	PRID – 3	7.5
	PND – 1	2.3
	AD – 1	1.4
March 2004	PAIGC – 45	33.9
	PRS – 35	26.5
	PUSD – 17	17.6
	UE – 2	4.3
	APU – 1	1.4
November 1999*	PRS – 38	28.5
	RGB-MB – 29	21.7
	PAIGC – 24	18.0
	AD – 3	2.3
	UM – 3	2.3
	PSD – 3	2.3
	FDS – 1	1.8
	UNDP – 1	1.8
July 1994	PAIGC – 62	46.4
	RGB-MB – 19	19.8
	PRS – 12	10.3
	UM – 6	12.7
	PCD – 1	5.3
	FLING – 1	2.6

Sources: IFES Election Guide, Africa Elections Database, and various news reports.

\* Percentage of total votes estimated based on previous results.

in 2005 and appointment of an ally as prime minister, however, were roundly criticized and eventually overturned when a multiparty coalition in parliament forced Vieira to select Martinho Ndafa Cabi, a leading PAIGC parliamentarian, as prime minister in 2007.

Vieira was killed by soldiers immediately following the still unexplained assassination of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Na Wai, in March 2009. In the lead up to elections to replace Vieira, several prominent politicians, including one candidate for president, were assassinated under mysterious circumstances, indicating how high the stakes for the presidency remained. Eventually, Malam Bacai Sanhá, a hero of the liberation era and long-time leader in the PAIGC, was elected in a second-round runoff in July 2009. Relative to the turbulence of the previous decade, President Sanhá oversaw an era of stability. The

government under Sanhá, which included Carlos Gomes Jr. as prime minister and General António Indjai as military chief of staff, lasted from 2010 through early 2012. This was the most stable regime in Guinea-Bissau since multipartyism was instituted in the early 1990s. Economic growth was strong, salaries were consistently paid to the civil service, and fiscal and balance of payment challenges were alleviated as cashew production and exports expanded. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank deepened their engagement and lauded the government's progress.

This brief window of stability and growth is not necessarily attributable to the particular actions or policies of President Sanhá, Prime Minister Gomes Jr., or General Indjai.<sup>19</sup> Tensions and mistrust between all three were rife. General Indjai, of course, had unlawfully detained military personnel and civilians, including Gomes Jr., and was presumed to be deeply involved in trafficking cocaine. For his part, Gomes Jr. had become very powerful within the PAIGC, the oldest and largest political party in Guinea-Bissau. Some party members resented his domineering tactics, and he sought to isolate them. His family members served in key positions throughout the government, and he held many business interests in petroleum and banking, among other sectors. Gomes Jr. also worked closely with the Angolan government, which extended tens of millions of dollars in credit, initiated large mining

### Guinea-Bissau's Emerging Institutions and Civil Society

Despite a history of centralized rule and pervasive political and economic patronage, Guinea-Bissau's institutional and civil society landscape has grown increasingly dynamic. The military and political elites remain the country's preponderant forces, but some institutions of government and individuals have attempted to operate more independently, and at times managed to influence some positive outcomes amid the country's persistent instability.

The country's elections, for instance, have been relatively well managed. No contest for the presidency has ever been won in the first round and most parliamentary elections have resulted in coalition governments. This suggests that the Commission on National Elections has been able to maintain a degree of independence, and incumbents have been unable to significantly rig the contests. Support for parties has shifted significantly between election cycles and between first- and second-round presidential votes, indicating that many voters exercise their rights pragmatically rather than along rigid regional, ethnic, or party lines.

Controlling the legislature has also proven increasingly difficult for Guinea-Bissau's presidents. In 1998, a parliamentary commission was set to report on an investigation into arms trafficking that would have implicated President Vieira, but was preempted by the outbreak of civil war. A multiparty coalition of parliamentarians came together in 2007 to oust an acolyte of President Vieira from the post of prime minister. Parliament has launched investigations into the killings of politicians and military officers, including the assassinations of the president and military chief of staff in 2009. These investigations have made little headway, but continued parliamentary debate over the matter, particularly its slow progress, has kept the issue at the forefront of headlines. The lack of a majority in parliament to support the transitional arrangements following the April 2012 coup has been a major obstacle for military leaders, demonstrating the growing clout of this legislative body.

Guinea-Bissau's media is also relatively lively and independent. Prior to the 2012 coup, it ranked just a few notches lower than Kenya and Senegal but surpassed Liberia, Malawi, and Zambia in press freedom rankings from Freedom House.<sup>20</sup> Several print media outlets have reported on drug trafficking and official corruption, some weathering lawsuits and intimidation. There are dozens of community radio stations across the country that the populace has come to rely on for news and information. Some have reported on controversial subjects, including one that uncovered unlicensed timber harvesting by Chinese firms, which prompted citizen protests against the activity. One prominent

logger, António Aly Silva, has reported on drug trafficking, published court documents into investigations of past military abuses, been sued by Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr., and was beaten by soldiers while reporting on the April 2012 coup d'état. In 2013, he published alleged evidence that Chinese firms were paying Bissau-Guinean embassy and consular staff in Macau and Beijing for Guinea-Bissau passports to circumvent Chinese business regulations and that these payments may have benefited ministers in the Gomes Jr. and post-2012-coup governments. While increasingly under pressure and intimidation, the press has been courageous in trying to inform the public, and Bissau-Guineans increasingly expect media sources that are relatively independent.

There are also several prominent watchdog and civil society groups in Guinea-Bissau. The Bissau-Guinean League for Human Rights has been operating since the mid-1990s and its leadership has explicitly criticized government leaders and institutions for subverting the rule of law and human rights. They have issued detailed reports analyzing human rights abuses and trends in the country. The Law Society of Guinea-Bissau has likewise publicly criticized actions by the armed forces as well as official corruption and manipulation of legal proceedings. Other civil society groups have worked to improve access to and participation in local government as well as provide technology and media training. One group, "Mom ku Mom" ("hand in hand"), has run a civil-military dialogue project since August 2009 in which it facilitates exchanges between current and former military officers, representatives of civil society groups, and victims of military abuses.

Even in the face of the country's burgeoning drug trade, there have been bright spots in law enforcement. The Judicial Police have made several laudable drug busts, including the arrest of some military figures, though prosecutions have typically founders in court. Even in the days after the April 2012 coup d'état, the Judicial Police made narcotics-related arrests in Bissau.<sup>21</sup> Despite having little money for fuel or adequate means of transportation, they have developed sources in communities around the country to spot suspicious planes and movement of goods. This progress has continued under several heads of the Judicial Police, suggesting deepening institutional resilience.

Contrary to what often seems a bleak outlook in Guinea-Bissau, therefore, aspects of government accountability have gained some traction. With the emergence of drug trafficking, worsening political crises, and expanding military interference in politics, however, many of these gains are under increasing pressure. Prominent civil society and human rights activists have been targets of lawsuits and pressure from political leaders. Some have been severely beaten by military personnel. Since the military coup in 2012, the authorities have purchased new equipment to identify and block radio networks, potentially curbing a vital source of information for the populace.<sup>22</sup> Dozens of officials, civil servants, and other notable individuals hid for months in foreign embassies after the coup, including the head of the Commission on National Elections (CNE) who after emerging from 2 months in the EU embassy was physically removed from the CNE offices by members of the military when he tried to resume his work. In many respects, these additional pressures are an affirmation of the growing influence that these groups and individuals have developed and the perceived threat they pose to the status quo. They also reveal the ongoing fragility of reform efforts.

investments in Guinea-Bissau, and deployed a bilateral military technical assistance and training mission in Bissau across the street from Gomes Jr.'s offices. Meanwhile, Sanhá promised to advance the fight against the growing cocaine trade in the country and conduct investigations into the series of political assassinations that had occurred in 2009. In fact, little progress was made on these issues during his tenure as president.

However, for the first time in Guinea-Bissau a balance of power between three nodes of influence—Sanhá, Indjai, and Gomes Jr.—laid the foundations for a period of stability. None was a close ally of the other. President Sanhá worked to prevent Indjai or Gomes Jr. from maneuvering to sideline each other, and both grew to appreciate the buffer that he maintained. President Sanhá did not entirely trust Prime Minister Gomes Jr., but tolerated his leadership rather than replaced him, as Gomes Jr. oversaw an improvement in the functioning of government. For that matter, Sanhá would have faced some

difficulty in removing the increasingly influential Gomes Jr., who had earned the trust of numerous international partners.

In short, the arrangement between these three leaders served as a weak form of checks and balances in Guinea-Bissau in a way that the country's formal government institutions had yet to realize. The Office of the President was held at bay by the growing support for Gomes Jr., while the military was held in check by Sanhá's presidential authority and Gomes Jr.'s influence. Gomes Jr. still faced an enemy in Indjai, but one kept at a distance by Sanhá.

The tenuous period of progress and stability from 2010 to 2012 began to unravel in late 2011. In November 2011, the elderly President Sanhá was hospitalized in France. With the withdrawal of his buffering presence, tensions rose. In December, troops of rival military officers fought battles on the streets of Bissau. On January 9, 2012, Sanhá died. Seizing an opportunity, Carlos Gomes Jr. stepped down as prime minister and declared an intention to run for president.

The move was controversial. As leader of the PAIGC, with family members and close allies throughout government (including a handpicked successor as prime minister), strong business interests, and close relations with allies such as Angola and China, Carlos Gomes Jr. would have dominated government in Guinea-Bissau as no previous leader had if elected president. Gomes Jr. had to maneuver within the PAIGC against efforts to prevent him from running as the party's presidential candidate. Gomes Jr. decided that a "show of hands" at party headquarters be used to choose their candidate, rather than the traditional secret ballot—meaning opponents to his leadership would be revealed and sidelined. Still, a third of all voting members of the PAIGC abstained, and some left the party to run as independent candidates when Gomes Jr. was selected as the PAIGC candidate for president. This included Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, who ran as an independent candidate, came in third, and was subsequently appointed transitional president in the post-coup agreement negotiated by ECOWAS.

Gomes Jr. did not win the first-round presidential elections outright in March 2012, but his victory in the second round against Kumba Ialá was almost a certainty. In the early morning of April 12, 2012, less than 3 weeks before the second-round vote, General Indjai's troops blew a hole through the outer wall of Carlos Gomes Jr.'s home and detained him. Interim President Raimundo Pereira was also seized, the constitution suspended, and a "Military Command" announced on state media that it had assumed control of government.

## GUNS, DRUGS, AND ILLICIT RESOURCES

While most well-known for the flows of cocaine that emerged over the previous decade, Guinea-Bissau suffered from illicit trafficking and its deleterious effects on stability before the arrival of drug shipments. During the 1990s, the country was a conduit for arms, primarily destined for the MFDC anti-government insurgent group in southern Senegal.

The trafficking in arms was an important source of funds that catalyzed other destabilizing patterns. Profits from arms trafficking became critical for elites to build and maintain alliances and loyalty—a mechanism of “self-financing” separate from the diversion of official budgets and abuse of authorities to feed patronage networks.<sup>23</sup> In the armed forces, in which poverty and delays in salary payments for low-level officers and troops had been common despite the privileged status enjoyed by military leaders, the loyalty of many troops was determined by which officers could support them financially. General Mané’s reported engagement in arms trafficking in Casamance in the mid-1990s and his access to funds made him a popular and powerful general, hence the widespread support he garnered in the lead up to the 1998-1999 conflict.

Trafficking was a key source of funds for Vieira, too. Deeply mistrusted by many elites, Vieira relied on funds from arms trafficking as a critical supplement to official corruption and patronage to maintain support. Since both Mané and Vieira relied on illicit trafficking to govern their respective networks of supporters, they were less bound to the normal constraints, laws, and other checks and balances of their offices and institutions, weak though they were.

The corruptive influences of illicit trafficking have intensified with the surge in high-value narcotics flowing through Guinea-Bissau. Illustratively, the value of the cocaine trade in West Africa is estimated to be at least eight times (and probably much higher than) the size of arms trafficking, and larger than all other illicit commodities trafficked in the region.<sup>24</sup>

Among the first prominent actors behind the surge in the cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau was President Vieira during his return to office from 2005 to 2009. Many senior military officers also became deeply involved. During General Na Wai’s years as chief of staff of the armed forces, cocaine was found at military installations;<sup>25</sup> soldiers were arrested from vehicles transporting cocaine; military officers intervened in police drug investigations to release prisoners and confiscate cocaine;<sup>26</sup> and in one well-known incident in July 2008 troops cordoned off and unloaded 500-600 kilograms of drugs from a private plane that landed at the country’s main airport from Venezuela.<sup>27</sup>

Over time, the flow of cocaine has expanded and grown more sophisticated.<sup>28</sup> Even though actual seizures and interdictions have been intermittent (see Table 4), the UN Secretary General reported to the UN Security Council in December 2012 that hundreds of kilograms of cocaine were entering Guinea-Bissau each week (with an approximate European wholesale value of at least \$10-20 million).<sup>29</sup> Many key figures have been involved. Rear Admiral José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto, twice the head of the navy, and General Ibraima Papa Camará, chief of staff of the air force, served as top military leaders even though they were sanctioned as drug traffickers by the U.S. government in April 2010. Na Tchuto was arrested along with several other Bissau-Guineans in April 2013 in international waters by U.S. authorities following a 7-month-long drug sting operation. He was recorded on multiple occasions agreeing to facilitate the transshipment of 4 tons of cocaine into Guinea-Bissau and, eventually, into the United States and Europe. Na Tchuto’s commission was \$1 million per ton. Four other military

officers including General Indjai were involved in a separate investigation. This plan involved smuggling cocaine in a shipment of military uniforms into Guinea-Bissau from Colombia by plane, after which the plane would return to Colombia bearing sophisticated weaponry purchased by the Guinea-Bissau military. According to the indictment of Indjai, he was recorded telling U.S. law enforcement informants that he would arrange for the purchase of surface-to-air-missiles and to ship cocaine. In 2012, near his home village of Mansôa, General Indjai struck ground on a sizable new estate with apparent plans for a private landing strip, presumably to better manage, protect, and conceal drug shipments. Since the coup, there have been few interdictions, reflecting the more conducive operating environment for traffickers.

Like arms trafficking, the drug trade has amplified the level of instability in the country and refutes the common assumption that transshipment of drugs—the movement of drugs produced and consumed

**Table 4. Reports of Bulk Drug Shipments Linked to Guinea-Bissau**

Date	Quantity (kgs)	Wholesale Value in Europe (millions of US\$)	Wholesale Value in Bissau (millions of US\$)	Circumstances
2005	535	27.8	8.6	Cocaine is found in a shipping container in Bissau bound for Portugal.
April 2005	18	0.9	0.3	Police raid a fish processing facility serving as a front for cocaine traffickers in the Bijagós islands. Several Latin Americans are arrested along with arms and drugs.
2005	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	20-kilogram bails of cocaine wash up on shore in Biombo, Guinea-Bissau, the lost cargo of a presumed shipwrecked or intercepted boat.
January 2006	106	5.5	1.7	A plane loaded with cocaine that departed from a runway near the Senegalese border is apprehended as it lands at a small airport in Segovia, Spain.
2006	1,000	52	16.2	Reported to have been delivered in Bijagós islands, though never intercepted.
September 2006	674	35	10.9	Drugs are seized following a chase and shootout between police and two Venezuelans in Bissau. Arms, GPS, cash, and other equipment are also seized.
December 2006	2,000	104	32.4	Guinea-Bissau Navy sources tell Agence France-Presse that a patrol boat found a vessel that had grounded close to shore. No seizures are ever reported.
April 2007	635	33	10.3	Cocaine seized by police from a vehicle in Bissau. Five individuals also arrested. Reportedly, the remainder of the 2.5-ton shipment was lost during pursuit.

Date	Quantity (kgs)	Wholesale Value in Europe (millions of US\$)	Wholesale Value in Bissau (millions of US\$)	Circumstances
May 2007	48	2.5	0.8	Cocaine is discovered among the freight on a commercial aircraft that landed in Lisbon, Portugal from Guinea-Bissau.
May 2007	28	1.5	0.5	Cocaine is seized from a vehicle in Morocco from Guinea-Bissau.
July 2008	550	28.6	8.9	Plane from Venezuela makes illegal landing and parks at military hangar of Bissau airport. Customs officers prevented from searching plane. Plane was unloaded and drugs were never found, though drug sniffing dogs and later examination of plane suggest 500-600 kgs were on board. Pilots claim they were transporting medicine for armed forces.
February 2009	200	10.4	3.2	Army officer reports that cocaine found in army hangar belonged to military general staff.
March 2010	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	General Indjai acknowledges his involvement in the landing of a plane full of drugs in Cufar, Guinea-Bissau.
December 2011	750	39	12	Reports of two planes delivering separate 750-ton shipments of cocaine to makeshift runways manned by soldiers. Subsequent reports suggest that disputes over these shipments may have triggered violence between troops in Bissau on December 26.
October 2012	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	A small propeller plane lands at airport in Bissau. Evidence emerges that the plane may be registered to the same Senegalese businessman wanted in connection with the landing of a 727 transporting cocaine in Mali in 2009.
February 2013	300	15.6	4.8	Informants notify Guinea-Bissau Judicial Police of a plane that lands illegally on a makeshift air strip on the island of Ilha de Melo near southern border of Guinea-Bissau. Judicial Police lack means of transportation to reach plane before it unloads and departs.

Sources: The UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Bi-Annual Individual Seizure Report (2006-2011) supplemented by various research and media reports from the International Crisis Group, BBC, IRIN, Lusa, and others.<sup>30</sup>

### Jet Setting in Guinea-Bissau

Drug busts in Guinea-Bissau frequently exemplify how intertwined the country has become with expansive transnational trafficking networks. Among the most common means of transporting drugs into and out of Guinea-Bissau are the use of propeller planes and jets.

Though landing planes into weakly monitored areas may sound simple, the method is often logically complex. Behind each shipment typically lays an intricate fabric of aircraft purchases, aircraft registries, companies, financiers, fake business deals to conceal the reasons for travel and cargo, complicit licensed pilots and crew, and cooptation of officials. In other words, a number of entities and individuals from multiple criminal networks operating in several countries and jurisdictions are involved in each flight that lands or departs from Guinea-Bissau.<sup>31</sup>

Several previous interdictions illustrate this pattern. For instance, on July 12, 2008, a Gulfstream II jet landed at Osvaldo Vieira International Airport in Bissau from Venezuela. The jet parked at a military hangar and was unloaded. Customs was prevented from searching the plane, and eventually it departed. Engine trouble forced the jet to return, after which members of the Guinea-Bissau Judicial Police seized the aircraft, which still contained small amounts of cocaine. With the assistance of international investigators, it was concluded that it had transported 500-600 kilograms of drugs. The pilot and crew were arrested along with several collaborating police officers and air traffic controllers.

As it turned out, the pilot was Carmelo Vásquez Guerra, a Venezuelan allegedly linked to Mexico's Sinaloa drug cartel and wanted in connection with the landing of a DC-9 airplane in Mexico in 2006 that had transported 5 tons of cocaine from Venezuela.<sup>32</sup> His brother and several other individuals were arrested in the 2006 incident. Not long after his arrest in Bissau, however, a judge ordered Guerra to be released, ruling that his provisional detention had expired. He soon disappeared but was again arrested for drug trafficking in Venezuela in 2011. Meanwhile, evidence seized from the Gulfstream jet that Guerra had flown to Bissau mysteriously disappeared just several days after the aircraft was seized. No case was ever advanced, and the plane remains abandoned on the airport tarmac in Bissau.

Like its pilot, the Gulfstream jet also held an interesting history. The aircraft was registered as N351SE in January 2008 by a corporation named LB Aviation Inc. with an address in Yorklyn, Delaware in the United States.<sup>33</sup> The address of incorporation is a house in a remote wooded area off a small country road and shared by a law firm named Whittington and Aulgur.<sup>34</sup> The plane was likely never in Delaware but located at the Fort Lauderdale airport in Florida, where it was photographed in February, March, and May of 2008 before reappearing in Bissau in July. As it happened, LB Aviation Inc. was registered to a Luis Bustamante in Fort Lauderdale for just 12 months, from September 2007 (a few months prior to when N351SE was certified in January 2008) to September 2008 (roughly 2 months after N351SE was seized in Bissau).

While stranded in Bissau due to engine problems, another plane arrived from Dakar to repair the Gulfstream and take it to Senegal.<sup>35</sup> This repair crew and rescue plane were under the employ of Africa Air Assistance, a business based in Senegal that had also been named as an owner of the infamous 727 jet that would later be found abandoned in northern Mali after delivering several tons of cocaine to traffickers in the Sahelian desert.<sup>36</sup> Planes owned by Africa Air Assistance or its proprietors have been photographed in West Africa, Portugal, Spain, and France. According to Bissau-Guinean blog reports, one plane was sighted making a mysterious landing at a military airport in Bissau in October 2012.

Similar circumstances suggest this is a recurring business model in the region. In January 2011, a plane carrying 944 kilograms of cocaine was seized in Barcelona, Spain along with its crew of three Argentines, all of whom were sons of former brigadier generals in the Argentine armed forces. The Challenger 604 aircraft had departed from a small airport outside Buenos Aires but landed in Amílcar Cabral International Airport in Cape Verde before reaching Spain. Cape Verde is a close neighbor of Guinea-Bissau, and the two actually comprised one state until 1981. The Challenger would be unable to make a transatlantic flight without refueling, hence the stop in Cape Verde, but there was also some media speculation, denied by Cape Verdean officials, that drugs may have been loaded or unloaded in Cape Verde.<sup>37</sup>

The Challenger 604 had a U.S. registration number, N600AM. It was owned by 604 Jet LLC since November 2006,<sup>38</sup> and prior to that by Secure Aviation LLC, both incorporated in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.<sup>39</sup> It had made previous trips to Malaga (Spain), Tel Aviv, and London. Secure Aviation LLC shares the same address and management as 604 Jet LLC, according to corporate registry documents. Meanwhile, court documents from the proceedings against the three Ar-

gentines reportedly indicated that they may have had connections to Colombian drug traffickers and had made multiple visits to Bolivia and Spain prior to their arrest.<sup>40</sup> Two of the three were ultimately convicted in January 2013.

While it is often lamented that little can be done about drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau given how weak and compromised the country's leadership is, the trade through the country is actually only one part of a more complex trail of individuals and activities, whether in neighboring African states, Latin American countries, Europe, or the United States.

in other states—has a benign effect on the transited country. The assassinations of Vieira and Na Wai in March 2009 were assumed to be linked in part to disputes over narcotics trafficking. In April 2010, General Indjai, then deputy chief of staff of the armed forces, detained his superior and other senior officers, effectively promoting himself to head of the military. Soon after, he reinstated Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto to his position as head of the navy, despite the fact that Na Tchuto was an internationally sanctioned drug trafficker and had fled the country in 2008 pending charges of coup plotting.

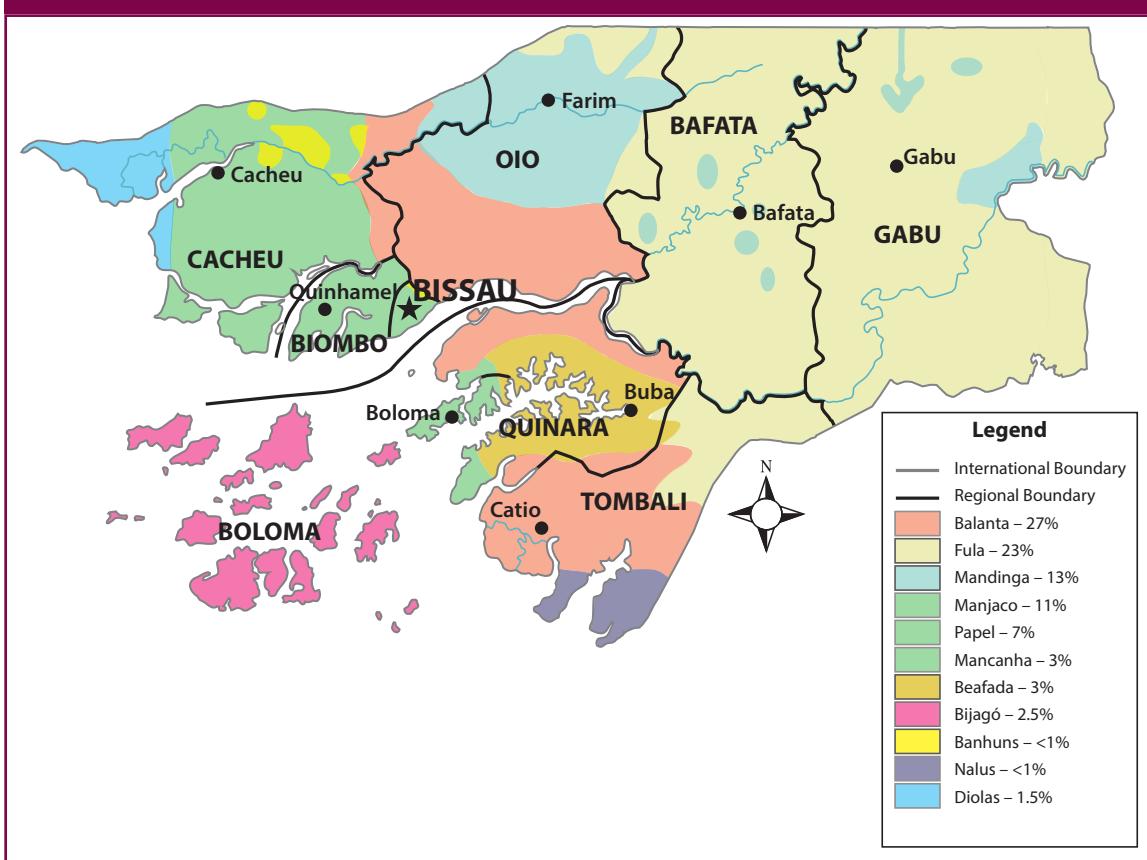
These erstwhile partners, however, had their own falling out almost 2 years later. Troops loyal to Indjai and Na Tchuto fought gun battles on the streets of the capital on December 26, 2011. Na Tchuto was eventually arrested and charged (again) with attempting a coup d'état. However, the entire incident may have been a dispute over shipments of cocaine, suggesting the rising potency of narco disputes within the worsening fragmentation of the armed forces.<sup>41</sup> In another volte-face, Na Tchuto once again was released from detention in May 2012. There were subsequent reports that he may have been promoted to a Vice Admiral and was on track to be reinstated as head of the navy until his arrest by U.S. authorities in April 2013.<sup>42</sup>

Military infighting and coups d'état are secondary and symptomatic of a larger, systemic challenge—the ongoing disintegration of state structures. Through the drug trade, certain senior officials, both in the military and civilian sectors, have been able to amass unprecedented wealth and influence, making them less beholden to the constraints of their offices, other institutions, or the political system. Their decisions are opportunistic, based on personal interests, and arbitrary. Meanwhile, power shifts have become more frequent and violent given the huge amounts of money involved in the drug trade relative to the economy. This transcends previous patterns of corruption and patronage in Guinea-Bissau, which required a certain degree of inter-elite or cross-institutional support. Drug trafficking has provided both the means and motive to sidestep the state, and it has sparked its own fierce competition. It has weakened the state as a whole, from the inside and out, as institutions are coopted. As a result, the government of Guinea-Bissau is less able to manage even certain basic functions of the state and the country's cycle of crises has amplified. The effects of the drug trade, thus, have rippled outward. With the sharp contraction of the cashew nut industry and the economy more generally, the majority of ordinary Bissau-Guineans, who were already living at the margins, have been negatively impacted. Though initially perceived as a matter of inter-elite competition, the destabilizing effects of the drug trade, compounded over time, have spread throughout the country and across borders.

## COMPETITION DRAWN ALONG ETHNIC LINES

Further complicating Guinea-Bissau's cycle of crises is an emerging ethnic dimension, particularly within the military. The issue is a relatively nascent aspect of the country's instability. During the liberation war against Portugal from 1963-1974 and the immediate post-independence period, Guinea-Bissau's ethnic diversity was not politicized. In the 1980s, President Vieira's attempts to stack loyalists in state institutions led to an over-representation of his ethnic kin, the Papel, but ethnicity was rarely cited in disputes or political debates. Even during the 1998-1999 civil war, factions did not divide along ethnic lines, nor did competing rhetoric or visions invoke ethnicity.<sup>43</sup> The leader of the anti-Vieira faction, General Mané, was a Mandinga with roots in The Gambia, but the Balanta comprised a plurality of the military. In the presidential elections after the conflict, Kumba Ialá's second-round electoral victory of 72 percent indicated significant support across ethnic, religious, and regional lines.

**Figure 2. Geographical Distribution of Guinea-Bissau's Ethnic Groups**



Source: United Nations, modified by author.

The politicization of ethnicity first emerged in the 1999 postconflict transition in the disputes and posturing between newly elected President Kumba Ialá and General Mané. Trying to consolidate his authority, Ialá had dismissed dozens of senior officers within the military and advanced the promotion almost exclusively of Balantas, his ethnic kin, which, comprising a quarter of the population, are marginally the largest ethnic group in the country (see Figure 2). Meanwhile, the military had more than trebled in size during the 11-month conflict, and the economy was in a parlous state. Senior posts in the military were desirable and something few wanted to relinquish. General Mané openly opposed Ialá's moves to shuffle his officers. In the subsequent standoff, Ialá elevated the issue of ethnicity, claiming that as the largest group in the country the Balanta deserved more representation in government, especially among senior military officers, and implicitly challenged Mané's authority on the basis of his ethnicity.

This made for a powerful rallying cry amid a difficult transition, particularly for those facing the prospect of losing their privileged positions in the military, which was due to undergo a large postwar demobilization. Cracks opened in Mané's support within the armed forces. Ialá ordered his arrest and, in November 2000, Mané was killed by troops loyal to Ialá.

Discord within the military festered, and senior officials within the armed forces have contested the ethnic makeup of the forces ever since. The dispute over Ialá's promotions and dismissals was not resolved until December 2004, long after Mané was killed and Ialá was deposed in a coup. In a delicate balancing act meant to achieve consensus, 65 officers were readmitted to the military and senior positions were given to former Mané and Vieira supporters while the military command was held by a Balanta.<sup>44</sup> Ethnicity continues to be a contentious issue within the military, with Balanta comprising 80 percent of Guinea-Bissau's armed forces. As a result, promotions and recruitment often provoke tensions and disputes.

Ialá, who remains a prominent political figure and recurring candidate in presidential elections, has continued to advance a decidedly pro-Balanta agenda. Even senior members of his PRS party accuse him of leading the party by "ethnic principles."<sup>45</sup> Given Ialá's weak record in office, this remains his most effective strategy of mobilization. However, it does not reflect deeper antipathies within the society. Aside from the interethnic tensions within the military and among civilian elites, there is little indication that these rifts have spread to the population as a whole. Interethnic or intercommunal violence is rare. This is to be expected given the broad diversity of ethnic groups within Guinea-Bissau where no single group approaches a majority.<sup>46</sup> That said, reforming and streamlining the military remains a critical element of stabilizing the country, and ethnic reconciliation within the armed forces will be vital to achieving sustainable progress. Moreover, the rise in ethnic divisions demonstrates how new drivers of instability in Guinea-Bissau rear up as other sources of instability go unresolved.

## DISTRUSTED INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

As Guinea-Bissau has lurched from crisis to crisis, neighboring states and international organizations

have, at times, become involved. Instead of fostering a stabilizing effect, these external actors have often been accused of choosing sides or competing with one another. As a result, most of Guinea-Bissau's closest neighbors and international partners are not broadly perceived as trustworthy mediators.

For example, within days of the first hostilities in the 1998-1999 conflict, neighboring Senegal and Guinea jointly deployed roughly 2,000 troops to support President Vieira. Bissau-Guineans widely opposed the foreign intervention and sided with General Mané's forces. Bouts of heavy fighting between Senegalese and Bissau-Guinean troops ensued. Eventually, ECOWAS intervened, but in a manner that many interpreted as favoring Vieira. The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), meanwhile, tried to negotiate peace, yet Senegal and ECOWAS resisted the organization's involvement, which they regarded as favoring Mané's forces.<sup>47</sup> In other words, few outside parties seemed credibly neutral in the conflict.

These dynamics persist today with some new players. Angola has become increasingly more involved in the affairs of Guinea-Bissau, both bilaterally on political, economic, and military issues as well as through the CPLP, which was chaired by Angola in 2010-2012. The mining firm Bauxite Angola announced in 2007 a \$321 million investment in Guinea-Bissau and paid a \$13 million upfront fee to the government to mine bauxite deposits (the main ingredient in aluminum) in the southeastern region of the country and to develop a port in Buba to facilitate exports. This region shares much of the same geology as neighboring Guinea, Africa's largest bauxite producer. Bauxite Angola is 70 percent owned by Angolan parastatal companies Sonangol and the Banco Angolano de Investimentos (Angolan Investment Bank), 20 percent owned by the Angolan government directly, and 10 percent owned by the government of Guinea-Bissau. In September 2010, a bilateral Technical and Military Assistance Protocol was signed in Luanda by Guinea-Bissau Minister of Defense Aristides Ocante da Silva and his Angolan counterpart Cândido Pereira Van-Dúnem. Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr. and Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos both affirmed their support for the effort during joint public remarks, laying the foundation for the March 2011 launch of the Angolan Security Mission to Guinea-Bissau (MISSANG) that eventually numbered 600 troops to implement a \$30 million security sector reform effort. Though he was involved in initial consultations about the Angolan mission, General Indjai suspected that MISSANG was primarily intended to support and protect Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr. and Angola's interests in the country. He claimed the troops were armed with heavy weaponry and tanks, which were inappropriate for a security sector reform mission.

Bissau-Guinean government officials, including Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr., have also made frequent trips to Luanda. During crises such as the fighting in Bissau in December 2011, Gomes Jr. sought refuge in the Angolan embassy. The government of Angola also forgave Guinea-Bissau's entire bilateral debt of \$38 million and extended a credit line of \$25 million to Guinea-Bissau in 2010.

Following the April 2012 coup d'état, MISSANG withdrew from the country. The ECOWAS Mission for Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) deployed 677 troops in May 2012, first to oversee the MISSANG

withdrawal and, under an expanded mandate, to support the transition and ongoing security sector reform efforts. Unfortunately, ECOMIB includes a substantial contingent of Senegalese troops, reviving antipathies from the 1998-1999 conflict and questions about the force's neutrality. It has also been heavily criticized in Guinea-Bissau as ineffective since it is based far from Bissau, engages in few patrols, and human rights abuses by the military have continued. The ECOWAS mission must also guard against West African troops being drawn into narcotics trafficking themselves.

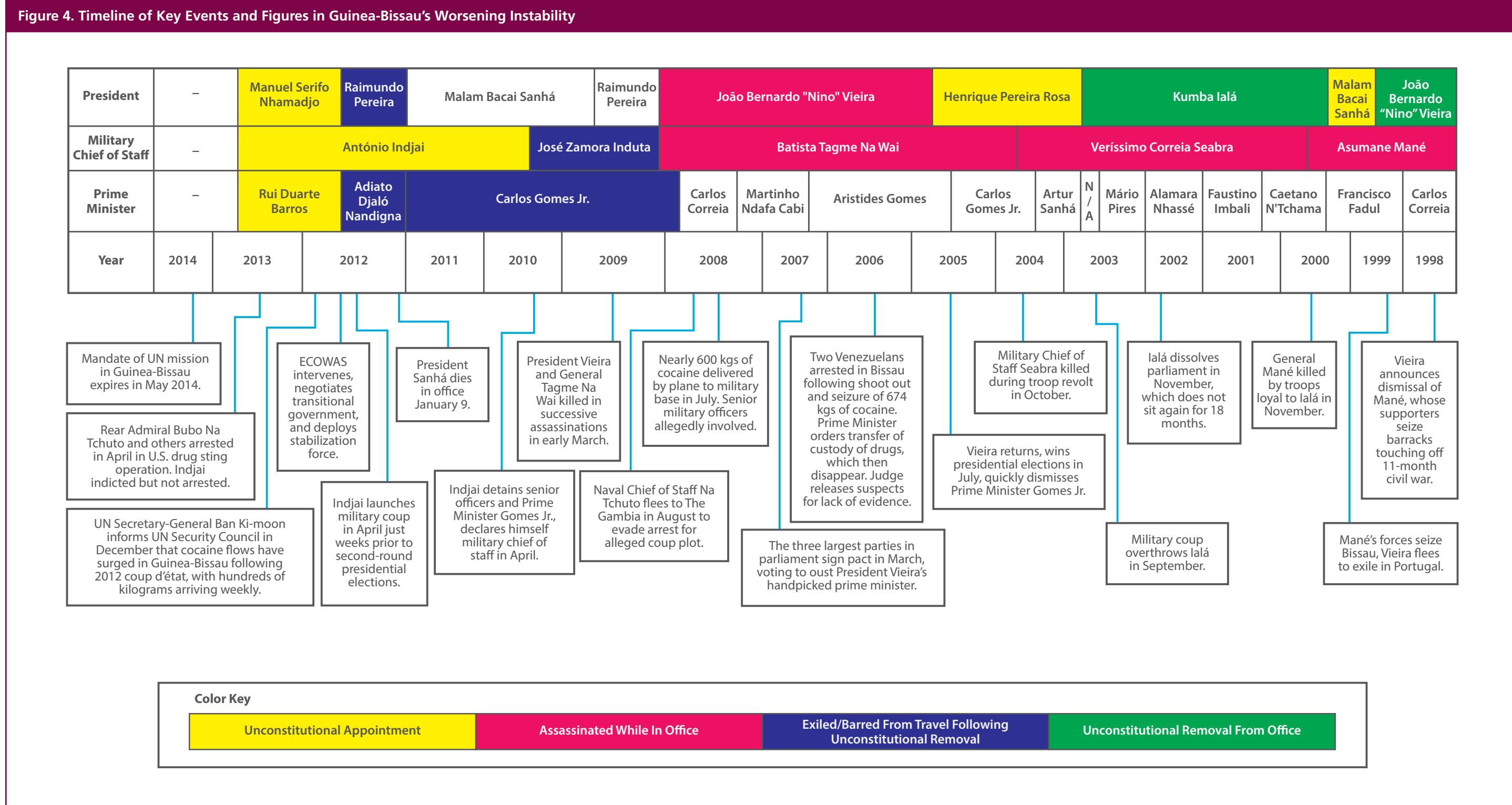
Though there has been some degree of cooperation, ECOWAS has viewed the Angolan intervention and the CPLP's involvement in Guinea-Bissau more generally as a breach of ECOWAS's designated role as the preeminent body for managing peace, security, and development in West Africa. Conversely, the CPLP has sometimes been accused of wanting to play a role beyond that of a body set up mainly to share cultural and trade links. From ECOWAS's perspective, CPLP lacks the budget, institutional capacity, and experience dealing with these sorts of challenges, whereas ECOWAS has a larger team and has allocated more resources for interventions in Guinea-Bissau.

More generally, CPLP and ECOWAS have pursued markedly different responses to the 2012 coup in what has been described as a turf war.<sup>48</sup> Immediately following the coup d'état, ECOWAS suspended Guinea-Bissau's membership and imposed travel and visa bans on top Guinea-Bissau military officials, including General Indjai. Yet ECOWAS quickly negotiated a transitional framework in May 2012 with Indjai's "Military Command" and several opposition parties. It was initially intended to last 12 months but has since been extended until the end of 2013. The framework was vehemently criticized by the PAIGC, which for months opted out of the framework, seeing it as legitimizing the coup. Notably, Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, an independent candidate for president in the first round of the March 2012 elections and a former PAIGC parliamentarian, was introduced by ECOWAS negotiators as the consensus transitional president following talks with major national stakeholders days prior to the signing of the transition pact. Having served as a member of the ECOWAS Parliament for 11 years, including 1 year as vice president of the assembly, Nhamadjo enjoys considerable support from ECOWAS leaders.

CPLP's approach has stood in marked contrast to that of ECOWAS. At CPLP summits since the coup, the deposed leaders of Guinea-Bissau have represented the country. The organization has withheld recognition of the transitional authorities and advocates for the immediate resumption of constitutional rule. Meanwhile, Gomes Jr. and other exiled political and military elites have lived in Portugal, the seat of the CPLP. In short, both the CPLP and ECOWAS appear to support separate networks of allies in Guinea-Bissau, deepening political polarization and reinforcing obstinacy among elites within the country.

Portugal has also remained influential in Guinea-Bissau. It has supported some capacity building initiatives in the country, particularly vetting, training, and supporting the expansion of the Judicial Police, which has demonstrated significant improvements. The Portuguese Parliament has also continued

**Figure 4. Timeline of Key Events and Figures in Guinea-Bissau's Worsening Instability**



to provide some technical support to the National Assembly in Bissau, including language and literacy training. Portugal has worked primarily through the European Union's engagement in the country, which ended its security sector reform mission in September 2010 following the rise of General Indjai and the reinstatement of Rear Admiral Na Tchuto. Likewise, Portugal has strongly supported the position of the CPLP with regard to the April 2012 coup d'état. This has left Portugal at odds with ECOWAS, which has sought to expand recognition of the transitional government. Holding a seat on the UN Security Council from 2011 through 2012, Portugal may have stymied efforts by ECOWAS to advance a new UN engagement strategy with the transitional government. According to critics of the CPLP, Portugal is perceived to have lost out in the coup d'état. Prominent Portuguese companies, including state-owned franchises, have links to businesses associated with Carlos Gomes Jr., including petroleum retailer Petromar, majority owned by Galp Energia, and the country's largest retail bank, Banco da África Ocidental (BAO), formerly owned by major Portuguese investment bank Montepio Geral.

A controlling stake in BAO was purchased in 2007 by Geocapital, a business owned by Macau gambling magnate Stanley Ho, at the same time that Carlos Gomes Jr. sold his shares in the bank.<sup>49</sup> Notably, Angola's lines of credit to Guinea-Bissau are managed by Banco Privado Atlântico, which is an international bank jointly owned by Sonangol and Global Pactum, a company also owned by Stanley Ho's Geocapital.<sup>50</sup> Stanley Ho has previously been investigated by U.S. regulators and law enforcement for his links to money laundering and Chinese organized crime.<sup>51</sup> The combination of Guinea-Bissau's limited connections to the international financial system and BAO's size and connections to banks in Portugal, Cape Verde, Macau, and Angola, make it an ideal conduit for laundering drug trafficking proceeds.

China's growing involvement in Guinea-Bissau is also notable. China financed the construction of the National Assembly in 2006, the Palace of Justice in 2008, a military hospital and barracks in 2010, and a multi-story government office building in 2011. Restoration work on the presidential palace commenced that same year. China has also provided budgetary assistance packages to the government, such as \$4 million provided in 2005 to pay salary arrears for civil servants and to finance a CPLP meeting in Bissau.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, in May 2012, it emerged that tens of thousands of Chinese had obtained Guinea-Bissau passports from the Guinea-Bissau consular office in Macau. This was apparently an attempt by mainland Chinese to skirt foreign investment restrictions as well as a potential means of money laundering.<sup>53</sup> The news emerged just 18 months after Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr. had overseen the opening of the consular office in Macau, where his son eventually obtained a job.<sup>54</sup>

By lining up so closely with Gomes Jr.'s interests, China's investments, financing, budgetary support, and other activities in Guinea-Bissau may be inadvertently fueling the competition and tensions that are playing out between civilian and military leaders. In the process, Chinese engagements in Guinea-Bissau may reinforce the patronage, behind-the-scenes competition, and institutional sclerosis that have proven so destabilizing.

In short, disagreements among ECOWAS, the CPLP, and other prominent international actors in Guinea-Bissau have compounded the stabilization challenges in the country. Those states with the most leverage and familiarity over the dynamics driving Guinea-Bissau's crises are increasingly seen as contributing to the polarization themselves. Their actions are therefore viewed with deep suspicion and their proposals for reform or compromise are effectively used as a justification to resist any change.

## ANALYSIS: FROM FRAGILE STATES TO NARCO-STATES

Guinea-Bissau's post-independence story may seem to be solely one of elite competition and intrigue—a small recurring cast of characters seeking to outmaneuver one another in ever more desperate ways, and in the process dragging the country from crisis to crisis. However, the country's troubles cannot be boiled down to the machinations of single individuals. The death in 2009 of President Vieira, arguably the most powerful and destabilizing figure since independence, gave Guinea-Bissau no respite from coups d'état or drug trafficking. Rather, the country's persistent instability is rooted in multiple, interwoven, and often institutional problems: a weak political framework, a politicized security sector, and illicit trafficking, all of which are compounded by the emerging instrumentalization of ethnic differences and the sometimes partisan roles played by international partners.

Yet Guinea-Bissau's challenges were not always so complex. Ethnic differences were minimal during the independence struggle and the 1998-1999 civil war. And the comparatively small European market for cocaine in the late 1990s and early 2000s left Guinea-Bissau with a negligible role in the international drug trade. Instead, at the root of much of Guinea-Bissau's instability has been the historically domineering role played by the Office of the President. Guinea-Bissau's presidents have cultivated a winner-take-all political system that allows them great discretion to tap public monies to support personal political interests, make appointments across multiple branches and levels of government, dismiss prosecutors to scuttle investigations, and dissolve governments. This existed prior to the politicization of the military, illicit trafficking, and other contemporary challenges. In many respects, it was the authority of the presidency to operate beyond appeal that prompted the military's strong reaction to President Vieira's move to replace the chief of staff of the armed forces in 1998, leading to the civil war and the military's creeping politicization thereafter. The concentration of power in the Office of the President sustained the unchecked and disastrous rule of Kumba Ialá in the early 2000s that led to another collapse of the state in 2003. It has also encouraged increasingly violent measures to compete for control of this important office, including facilitating cocaine trafficking and stirring ethnic tensions. Even the country's international partners have been drawn into this competition by aligning themselves behind opposing factions—and sacrificing their neutrality and credibility in the process. Therefore, while Guinea-Bissau's crises are interconnected, it is the over-concentration of power in the presidency—and, inversely, the political system's weak framework of checks and balances—that have directly and indirectly bred the country's contemporary complex of instability.

The destabilizing cycle of all-or-nothing political competition in Guinea-Bissau, deepened by a decade of drug trafficking, has also surpassed the ability of domestic institutions or leaders to realistically manage or reverse this growing fragmentation internally. Rather, sustained international involvement is needed to stabilize the country. External actors have ever increasing incentives to become engaged, given how Guinea-Bissau's worsening predicament is feeding instability elsewhere in the region. A lesson from previous external engagements, however, is that piecemeal efforts to contain the country's problems or appease the reigning politico-military elites in power have only allowed new and more intractable problems to emerge. Instead, a sustained, integrated strategy to mitigate Guinea-Bissau's key drivers of instability is necessary to break the country's cycle of crises. Fortunately, there is a viable contingent of domestic actors laying the groundwork for recovery. An emerging civil society, a resilient media sector, the national legislature, and other independent voices could provide the balance and momentum needed to persistently advance a reform agenda. They are unlikely to gain traction without political, financial, and technical support from international partners, however.

The stabilization challenge in Guinea-Bissau should also be viewed as a warning for Africa—and an imperative to prevent more narco-states from developing. For, even though it is the first, Guinea-Bissau is not a special case. The centralization of authority, weak institutions, poor security sector governance, minimal development, history of conflict, and social cleavages are recurring features of fragile states.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, these are the conditions that narcotics trafficking networks seek out (see text box on page 31). Various permutations of these circumstances prevail in the 25 African states, including Guinea-Bissau, listed as “critical” or “in danger” of failing in the 2012 Failed States Index.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, trafficking in high-value narcotics has grown in many of Guinea-Bissau's neighbors. Cocaine has been seized in large quantities in Senegal, and regional traffickers have used the country as a base. A bank in The Gambia was sanctioned by the U.S. government in 2011 for its linkages to a West African drug-trafficking and money-laundering network operated by Hezbollah.<sup>57</sup> Several large seizures of cocaine have occurred in Sierra Leone, including an incident in 2008 that implicated the Minister of Transportation and led to his dismissal. Never indicted, he was rehired as a special advisor to the President not long after and became Minister of Political and Public Affairs in 2013.<sup>58</sup> The nature of narcotics trafficking in Africa also continues to evolve. There have been multiple incidents not only of cocaine but also heroin trafficking in Ghana. Large quantities of chemicals used to manufacture amphetamines have been seized in Côte d'Ivoire and Niger.<sup>59</sup> One trafficking network detained in 2010 in Liberia was surreptitiously recorded by U.S. law enforcement informants trying to convince Liberia's senior intelligence officials to establish a drug laboratory to manufacture amphetamines for sale in the United States and Japan. Since July 2011, five sophisticated amphetamine laboratories have been discovered in Nigeria.<sup>60</sup> Amphetamines often sell at a much higher wholesale price than cocaine or heroin, netting higher profits for criminal groups. This, in turn, could usher in a whole new era of narcotics-driven destabilizing effects in Africa.

### The Making of a Narco-State

From the perspective of a drug trafficker assessing the “ease of doing business,” fragile states potentially offer a number of attractive features to the international narcotics supply chain:

- ◆ Geographically advantageous relative to producer and high-value user countries or to critical interim destinations to reach those markets. “Geography” here is conceived not just in terms of physical distance between producers and consumers, but also in terms of how they are connected through high-traffic air and sea ports, land routes, or the international finance and banking system.
- ◆ Sufficient concentration of authority in relatively few individuals, particularly over air, sea, and land connections, who are amenable to facilitating complex movement of bulk drug shipments.
- ◆ Amenability of individuals to cooption is shaped by some combination of:
  - Poor salary, weak career prospects, limited institutional pride, low professionalism, weak national identity, lack of allegiance to the community, etc.
  - High need for revenues among key individuals, whether because of weak or uncertain alternative sources of funds or because of competition within prevailing political economy.
  - Prevalence of other forms of corruption, particularly other forms of illicit trafficking which leads to a smooth segue or “graduation” to high-value narcotics trafficking.
  - Weak understanding of over-the-horizon risks associated with transshipment, prompting communities and interest groups to ignore illicit activity.
- ◆ Low risk of discovery due to weak oversight, independent media, or civil society.
- ◆ Low risk of prosecution due to unclear legal code, such as a lack of criminalization of drug smuggling, or a manipulable judicial system, which allows for skipping bail or corrupting key figures.
- ◆ Low cost of operations, primarily in terms of payments to local facilitators for services.
- ◆ Weak, incomplete, or opaque regulatory environment allowing for simple acquisition of land and front companies.

Guinea-Bissau is attractive to traffickers because it is close to the growing market in Europe and has reasonably good connections to Portugal, a key landing point for drugs in Europe, as well as other African hubs such as Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia, or Morocco. President Vieira was certainly amenable to trafficking and retained sufficient authority to facilitate its movement. He may even have been one of the first individuals to introduce bulk cocaine trafficking through Africa to Europe based on connections he developed while exiled in Portugal, Senegal, and Guinea from 1999 to 2005. As the trafficking developed, military leaders also became involved, given their authority over land, air, and sea routes as well as their ability to protect bulk shipments. In fact, the military’s previous involvement in arms trafficking may have facilitated a segue into drug trafficking. The military and Vieira as well as other key elites were already in competition for power and had few comparable alternative revenue streams. They would, therefore, welcome the huge funds associated with drug trafficking to strengthen their positions. There were few other institutions that could intervene: the National Assembly, the Judicial Police, and the judiciary remained too weak. Risk of discovery was low, though civil society groups and independent media have consistently highlighted the issue in recent years, some bravely fingering key leaders and officials. Risk of prosecution is minimal. What few arrests have occurred have generally been dismissed in court or delayed. The regulatory environment is extremely lax. Acquiring land or establishing companies is fairly simple with minimal paperwork or oversight, particularly for well-connected individuals. All these conditions gave Guinea-Bissau a “comparative advantage” in becoming Africa’s first narco-state.

These changes signify how the international drug trade in Africa continues to deepen, evolve, and grow. It was only in 2006-2007 that alarms were first raised over Latin American cartels exploiting West Africa’s weak states to transship cocaine to Europe.<sup>61</sup> By 2012, substantial shipments of cocaine from South America were flowing into West Africa, heroin from South Asia was being trafficked through East Africa, and amphetamines were being manufactured on the continent for sale in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>62</sup> Increasingly, much of this activity has been taken over by African criminal networks. Left unaddressed, what was initially a transshipment problem has metastasized into something larger, more complex, homegrown, and destabilizing.

Given this constant evolution and expansion of drug trafficking in Africa, Guinea-Bissau may not be the continent's only narco-state, just its most recognizable. With a small economy, high levels of pre-existing competition among politico-military elites, a history of conflict, and weak state institutions, the deterioration that accompanied high-value narcotics trafficking progressed rapidly in Guinea-Bissau leading to a quickening pace of coups, killings, and crises. Lacking this same combination and intensity of negative influences, few countries in Africa resemble Guinea-Bissau. This does not mean that other African narco-states are not emerging, however. Mali, for example, first exhibited overt signs of drug-fueled instability in 2007-2008.<sup>63</sup> Rising levels of cocaine trafficking into and through Mali during the last decade contributed to a weakening of the Malian state, including cooptation of the military, and to competition among emerging militia, criminal, and terrorist networks in the northern half of the country.<sup>64</sup> This led to the rapid spiral of events in early 2012. What had once been a model of emerging democracy and stability in West Africa was subjected to a military coup and divided in half between a military-run state in the south and an ungoverned north controlled by violent Islamist militias. Comparable processes may be unfolding in other African countries, but as these changes tend to occur from the inside out, they are not initially readily evident. It is only when crises begin to take hold that the degree to which the state has been compromised comes to the surface.

This is a common feature of narcotics trafficking. While the drug trade conjures images of the violence that has for years plagued Mexico or Colombia, this is more often the reflection of a late stage in the evolutionary process of narco-states. Trafficking usually commences unnoticed, as traffickers coopt critically placed individuals or institutions to facilitate their clandestine activities.<sup>65</sup> This leads to a gradual weakening of state institutions from within. Over time, the police, the judiciary, the military, and the political process as a whole can be subverted by high levels of drug-fueled corruption.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, the drug trade feeds pre-existing drivers of instability within a transshipment country. As the trade grows, the state becomes weaker. Meanwhile, inter-elite competition accelerates, as does political violence, corruption, and gang or militia activity. In some countries, trafficking grows to the point where corruption and cooptation no longer suffice in a high stakes trade for what are ultimately limited resources involving numerous actors and groups. Instead, intimidation and violence are used to protect or grow the drug trade in such mature drug trafficking environments. Combating established trafficking groups and reversing what has been years of a metastasizing problem requires an intense and often lengthy period of rehabilitation and reform. As in Guinea-Bissau, such reform is often all but impossible without substantial amounts of external engagement, far more than would have been necessary to slow or prevent such deterioration had it been confronted sooner when the challenge was more unidimensional.<sup>67</sup>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The persistent state of crisis in Guinea-Bissau has grown more acute and more violent. Moreover, it is increasingly driving instability among its neighbors, particularly in Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and elsewhere. Rather than a symptoms-based response, however, a stabilization framework is needed to resolve the deep-rooted political fissures in the country. Breaking the country's cycle of crises will require fundamental reforms. These fissures are also multilayered, so multiple tracks of reform must be pursued concomitantly and collaboratively by actors at the national and international level. Given the entrenched interests of influential figures in the status quo, pushback to any reform initiative is inevitable.

## Political and Governance Reforms

At the heart of Guinea-Bissau's many crises is the centralization of power and lack of checks and balances on the Office of the President. The thin margins of victory in past presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau and the regular reshuffling of parties elected to parliament are indications that the electorate favors a more balanced government that includes broad representation. Bissau-Guineans want a decisionmaking process that is more deliberative and rules-based, breaking the winner-take-all ethos that has long dominated Bissau-Guinean politics, particularly the often-violent contests over the Office of the President. Establishing multiple poles of power can lower these stakes and enhance stability and prosperity. Indeed, during President Sanhá's term in office, an almost accidental balance of power among key factions across the government contributed to a period of peace and economic growth with broad-based benefits. Such a system of checks and balances needs to be institutionalized, however, potentially including legislation that:

- ◆ Endows a prime minister with more executive authorities
- ◆ Specifies the limited authority of the president to make appointments at the national, regional, and local levels
- ◆ Reinforces parliament's role in approving budgets and monitoring spending
- ◆ Grants more authority and autonomy for:
  - Office of the attorney general
  - Courts system
  - Anti-corruption commission
  - Human rights commission
- ◆ Revitalizes a merit-based civil service.<sup>68</sup>

These and other changes will require Guinea-Bissau to revise its constitution, which still largely reflects the one-party state that emerged in the immediate post-independence era. Explicit references to political parties by name, the liberation movement, or other specific events feature prominently in a document

that should be timeless and serve as the foundation of a political system that is larger than any one party, institution, or era. A committee featuring political and legal experts with strong representation from Bissau-Guinean civil society groups should be convened to develop a modern governance framework more conducive to a stable, balanced, and enduring democratic order. Such an initiative would draw from the precedents set by the various constitutional assemblies held throughout West Africa during past transitions, including the committee on constitutional reform that was established following a political crisis in Niger over the powers of the presidency that resulted in a military coup d'état in 2010. The committee featured 18 Nigerien political and legal experts, including a scholar from the diaspora who served as chairman, and formulated a draft constitution following extensive deliberations as well as input from civil society and interest groups. The draft was eventually adopted by national referendum, paving the way for a resumption of constitutional order under a new governance framework with greater limitations on the presidency and the office of the prime minister, a stronger constitutional court, and clearer individual rights, among many other revisions.<sup>69</sup>

While generally considered to be well organized, balanced, and representative in spite of its paltry budget, Guinea-Bissau's parliament, the National People's Assembly, is underutilized as a mechanism for reform and change in the country. Members do not feel empowered and lack experience working with counterparts to collectively advance a policy agenda or exercise the oversight roles of a legislature. Moreover, village-level meetings and initiatives to connect communities with their deputies are rare, creating a gap between national-level politics and community-level interests that weakens both parliamentarians and citizens. Although the legislatures of Portugal and the United Kingdom have made efforts to promote the values of parliamentarianism in the context of the country's development, the international community as a whole needs to elevate the National Assembly in a strategy for the normalization of Guinea-Bissau's politics and to empower its deputies, who should legally be at the forefront in representing citizen interests and efforts to build cohesion in Bissau-Guinean society.

A more empowered National Assembly in Guinea-Bissau will require a stronger role for the parliamentary opposition. Successive opposition groups in the National Assembly have found themselves without meaningful participation in debates pertaining to the state budget, the composition of bills, government programs, and other, critical components of political life. This disconnect also explains the propensity of some opposition politicians to subvert the democratic process, collude with the military, and destabilize the country. In many legislatures and parliaments, leading opposition parties are given control of select committees, typically called Public Accounts Committees, with powers to hold hearings, call government officials to testify, commission audits of government programs, and assess spending. Creating a similar committee in Guinea-Bissau's National Assembly may strengthen checks and balances, incentivize opposition politicians to work within rather than around the political system, and minimize the winner-take-all metrics that have so dominated Guinea-Bissau's politics.

## Dealing with the Past

Regardless of how reasonable or balanced any reform agenda may be, the intensity of polarization and divisions fostered through years of political machinations, abuses of power, conflict, and coups d'état will complicate implementation and consensus-building.<sup>70</sup> Trust and dialogue are in dire need of repair.

The Commission for National Reconciliation, established by the National Assembly in 2009, should be a lead actor for efforts to foster trust and dialogue. Thus far, the Commission has received financial and technical assistance from the UN, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the governments of Portugal and Japan, while the British Parliament has provided external mediation. It engages in outreach on multiple tracks, both among key political and military factions as well as with community leaders, citizen groups, and civil society around the country. Its purpose is to gradually revive a norm of communication vital to peaceful dispute resolution in Guinea-Bissau.

Without established channels of communication to mitigate tensions or resolve misunderstandings, small incidents in Guinea-Bissau quickly gain their own momentum and result in full-blown but often avoidable emergencies. However, from 2010 through early 2012, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the Commission on National Reconciliation made much progress in routinizing semi-private and even public exchanges between key aides to General Indjai, Prime Minister Gomes Jr., and President Sanhá. Though many of these meetings achieved little in terms of concrete reforms, simply institutionalizing such regular exchanges can slowly rebuild trust and often reveal areas of mutual agreement that can form the foundation for progress. Unfortunately, with the death of President Sanhá in early 2012, this emerging dynamic was broken and not sufficiently entrenched to prevent the subsequent tensions that emerged and resulted in the April 2012 coup d'état. However, the prior effort demonstrated that constructive dialogue was possible. The Commission on National Reconciliation and the UN mission should work toward revitalizing exchanges between key political and military factions toward more firmly establishing a routine of dialogue to prevent crises from spinning out of control.

The Commission on National Reconciliation is also mandated to prepare for and host a National Conference for Pathways to Peacebuilding and Development. This broad-based event is meant to serve as a venue where a cross section of Bissau-Guineans can introduce their priorities, grievances, and aspirations for the country and discuss the causes of conflict and potential reforms and strategies needed to reconcile the prevailing national polarization. Toward this end, extensive preparatory consultations by the Commission on National Reconciliation have already been conducted around the country to foster broad-based buy-in for the effort. In addition to holding multiple meetings in Bissau with representatives from key political and security sector institutions, the Commission on National Reconciliation held 22 meetings with 1,400 attending delegates over the course of 80 days of travel through all administrative regions of the country in 2010 and 2011. Views and discussions captured from these meetings will go directly toward informing the agenda of the National Conference. Additionally, international

peace experts from postconflict countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Northern Ireland will be included in the National Conference to serve as objective facilitators as well as repositories of lessons on reconciliation from other polarized contexts.

The National Conference was originally scheduled to take place in late January 2012, but President Sanhá’s death in early January forced its postponement. The process then fell by the wayside following the subsequent coup d’état. However, much valuable work has already been achieved toward revitalizing a sense of trust and dialogue in the country. Accordingly, the National Conference should be put back on track. It will prove to Bissau-Guineans that they can constructively share their views, that they will be heard, and that dialogue is a valuable means to air grievances and build a shared understanding.

Complementary to the National Conference process, other sustained reconciliation initiatives are needed, particularly between civilians and the military. Existing efforts to routinize exchanges between veterans, officers, and civil society representatives, such as “Mom ku Mom,” should be further supported and expanded. Revisiting the history of Guinea-Bissau’s united struggle for independence may also help bridge divides between the security sector and broader society. In fact, this proposal first emerged during regional meetings in preparation for the 2012 National Conference. This project could feature civilian historians and civil society representatives working with an ethnically mixed group of “freedom fighters” from the anti-colonial struggle. The project should focus on the bonds formed during the struggle, the sacrifices of all groups, the shared sense of pride that was developed, and how these bonds could be rekindled. A frank appraisal of this history could heal divisions within the armed forces, revive respect for this institution among the rank and file as well as the population, and prevent a further deterioration of state-society relations.

## **Depoliticization of the Military**

Another fundamental driver of instability in Guinea-Bissau is the politicization of the military. Legislative reforms must be undertaken to set clear parameters on the roles and responsibilities of the military, founded on a clear-eyed national security assessment and strategy. Among other things, such reforms will require reestablishing the authority for setting national security policy with legitimate civilian leaders and active legislative oversight. Doing so vests such authority in leaders who are accountable to the general population.<sup>71</sup> Given the legacy of distrust between the presidency and military in Guinea-Bissau, reinstituting such norms would likely require creating a widely respected, independent oversight body knowledgeable in security issues so that military leaders are protected from politically motivated punitive acts by civilian authorities.

***Rebalancing the Ranks.*** While the military’s input into officer promotions and recruitment should continue, these decisions should be made by the national legislature based on clear, merit-based guidelines that aim to raise the level of professionalism within the military. Such decisions should also be guided by the objective of national reconciliation following nearly two decades of worsening patronage, ethnic

favoritism, and other abuses in the armed forces. Existing units must also be gradually restructured to integrate multiple ethnic groups and regularly engage in exercises and training to build cross-ethnic camaraderie. With the Balanta comprising nearly 80 percent of troop strength but accounting for just a quarter of a diverse population, they are currently highly over-represented in the armed forces.

**Term Limits.** Limits on the terms in which senior officers can serve in appointments—a common standard in other countries—should be adopted to prevent policy or strategic inertia in critical offices, reduce patronage and corruption, and open opportunities for rising officers. In many countries, senior officers are nominated for military commissions by the executive branch, approved by parliament or a parliamentary committee, and then serve 2 to 3 year terms with an option for an additional term. Such personnel management adjustments will be critical to accommodating concerns that military affairs will be dominated by a single faction of politico-military elites or use promotions and recruitment as a means of patronage, all of which have been the bases for past crises. Instituting such limits is also consistent with a trend in Africa toward presidential term limits.

**Pensions.** Any initiative that institutionalizes term limits for senior military officers should also uphold attractive military pensions and benefits for those who retire in good standing. In Guinea-Bissau, the biggest concern among many senior officers is a system of pensions that has malfunctioned for years, resulting in extreme reluctance to retire but dwindling interest to serve.

International partners of Guinea-Bissau could lend valuable support for meaningful reform efforts in this area. Many advances have been made in improving the system of military pensions in Guinea-Bissau over the last decade with help from ECOWAS, the CPLP, and European countries. Funds have been set aside and an administrative system put in place, but the scheduled launch of the Special Pension Fund system in January 2012 never took place. Following the coup d'état in April 2012, cooperation between international actors all but disappeared. Launching and sustaining a system of pensions might stimulate badly needed demobilization and rebalance the military's composition, which contains far too many old and senior officers.

**Professionalizing Administrative Oversight.** Methods of delivering salaries could be made more transparent to discourage corruption and improve morale. A system to deliver payments electronically by mobile phone should be explored. In Afghanistan, salary payments, person-to-person money transfers, and other banking services have been made available to police via mobile phones using M-Pesa, a mobile technology pioneered in Kenya. Users in Afghanistan were pleased with the program and even reported that they were receiving “raises,” though in actuality the process was just preventing unscrupulous superiors from routinely skimming their staff’s wages. Meanwhile, large numbers of “ghost” police officers, nonexistent employees created to divert salaries, were discovered and removed from the payrolls.<sup>72</sup> Mobile phone-based payments of civil servants are also increasingly common in Kenya and South Africa<sup>73</sup> and have been launched in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where they will be dramatically expanded as a result of the success and popularity of the system.<sup>74</sup>

**Professional Military Education.** Offers of military exchanges and training from international partners might further incentivize and professionalize Guinea-Bissau's military brass, gradually reversing the politicization of the military. Exchanges with staff colleges and training academies in countries with strong traditions of civilian control of the military and that have a sufficiently neutral reputation in Guinea-Bissau would be essential. Such professional military education opportunities have been shown to have a measurable impact on stabilizing countries undergoing political transitions.<sup>75</sup> Brazil, which remains respected in Guinea-Bissau and has led some peacebuilding efforts in the country, may be an ideal option for such exchanges. India may be another, given Indian businesses' dominant presence in Guinea-Bissau's cashew industry, their relatively neutral reputation in the country, and the professionalism of their armed forces. Several African countries have laudable staff colleges and could provide useful opportunities for Bissau-Guinean officers, such as Ghana, Botswana, or South Africa. Other African partners—such as Senegal, Angola, and Nigeria—may initially be poorly received given their perceived alliances in Guinea-Bissau. International partners not hosting such exchanges could support them financially. Curricula should emphasize strategic analysis and planning, threat assessments, and the practicalities of democratic security sector governance. However, tactical or operational training should not be entirely neglected since it may boost morale, confidence, and unit solidarity.

**Incentives to Reform.** Why would the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau willingly support such a reform agenda and submit to civilian authority? First, members of the armed forces, from the rank and file to the very senior levels of the officer corps, have all been victims of the country's political volatility and crises. Heads of the armed forces rarely step down of their own accord, and many have been assassinated. Nor is serving in the inner circle of the military leadership a guarantee of safety and continued prosperity. For example, General António Indjai's chief of security was arrested in February 2013 for unknown reasons. The once Chief of Staff of the Navy, Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, repeatedly moved in and out of the inner circles of the military—from detention cells to leadership meetings and back—before his arrest by U.S. authorities in April 2013.<sup>76</sup> It has been nearly 30 years since a military chief of staff was replaced in a peaceful fashion.

Along with this instability, there are few opportunities for making a genuine career in the armed forces. Training is minimal, benefits such as housing or medical care are very poor, and pay is infrequent. For young troops and rising officers, promotions and upward mobility are determined by the politics of the moment rather than merit or performance. And, not to be disregarded, the armed forces' reputation among the population is abysmal. They are distrusted, disliked, and unwelcome. In other words, while fears and resistance to reforming the security sector are inevitable, there is hardly a unified internal commitment to the existing system. In contrast with the violence and uncertainty of the politicized military in Guinea-Bissau, civilian and democratic oversight of the armed forces tends to deliver more predictable resources for force modernization, greater popular legitimacy for the security services, and more protections from arbitrary demotion or detention for officers.<sup>77</sup>

Beyond tangible reform initiatives, consistent and transparent communication will be vital to any security sector reform effort. Given the years of violent factionalism within the armed forces that have seen senior leaders killed and multiple revolts, suspicions are likely to be high. Spoilers will inevitably spread misinformation to undermine reform efforts. Thus, any plan for change in the security sector must be clear and widely disseminated, and reformers must engage national and local media, particularly radio and by mass SMS, to continually explain the rationale for transformation, the benefits, and to provide relevant updates. Given prevailing civil-military divides and suspicions, identifying skilled communicators within the armed forces to serve as vital liaisons would help counter rumors within the barracks.

Progress in reforming the armed forces is likely to be gradual and setbacks are probable. This was a common feature in previous successful security sector transformations in fragile or transitioning states, including Portugal, Brazil, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, among other countries.<sup>78</sup> Guinea-Bissau has never had strong military doctrine, a clear institutional framework for governing the security sector, or a workable national security strategy. Thus, sudden changes to the armed forces will provoke a strong backlash, and many reforms will initially be infeasible given the weak institutional capacities in the military and defense sector. Rather, change must be made with a view to the long term and persist through any relapses or setbacks.

## **Reversing the Narco-State**

In tandem with political and security sector reforms, narcotics and other forms of illicit trafficking must be more directly confronted. Trafficking networks have coopted many military and civilian officials in Guinea-Bissau, dramatically reducing the availability of local partners and points of entry to make progress. Still, much can be achieved in this fight by focusing on the links between Guinea-Bissau and other intermediaries in this trade. For instance, cocaine that arrives in Guinea-Bissau must travel through neighboring states to reach markets in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, there is an important role for international actors to play in curbing this trade. More strenuous efforts to disrupt these networks of traffickers at the regional level would make trafficking more expensive and discourage the use of Guinea-Bissau as a narcotics corridor. Likewise, European states and the United States could expand surveillance and reconnaissance of trafficking as well as interdiction of bulk shipments. The Maritime Operations and Analysis Center-Narcotics (MAOC-N), a combined effort of several European nations working closely with the United States, Cape Verde, Brazil, and other countries to collaborate in intelligence and interdiction, could concentrate more efforts and assets on Guinea-Bissau. Additionally, while some sea-based trafficking has been intermittently interdicted, efforts to identify and restrict air traffic are needed. Small planes that can carry hundreds of kilograms of cocaine are one of the preferred methods of moving drugs into and out of Guinea-Bissau. Many are registered outside of the country. Efforts to better monitor, record, and inspect activity at airports in Senegal, The Gambia, the Canary Islands, Guinea, and Cape Verde may complicate efforts to use this mode of trafficking. Simple steps might have a big impact, such as supporting watchdog groups that monitor planes that land and depart from airports and share registration information online. Likewise, establishing better relationships with

fishing communities and their professional associations might foster a valuable source of information on sea-based trafficking, as artisanal fisherman are frequently courted for their assistance in moving drugs from ship-to-shore or along coastal trafficking routes.<sup>79</sup>

While drug interdiction is an insufficient solution to drug trafficking and its impacts, in Guinea-Bissau it could weaken spoilers by reducing their use of trafficking proceeds to manipulate patronage networks. This would provide vital breathing room to advance other technical assistance and structural reforms to prevent the cooptation and infiltration of state institutions by trafficking networks. Additionally, targeted investigations like the one that led to the arrest of Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto and four other Bissau-Guinean traffickers in April 2013 can also have a significant impact, both by breaking up existing networks, challenging the culture of impunity, and changing the risk calculation of other traffickers.

Though difficult, pressure on trafficking activities must be increased within Guinea-Bissau as well. This will mean improving the capacity of investigators, prosecutors, and judges to pursue cases. Surprisingly, the progress of many of these institutions has been a bright spot in recent years, including real achievements in the Judicial Police.<sup>80</sup> Past parliamentary inquiries, including into arms trafficking in the late 1990s, also shed light on such illicit activities. However, reformers in Guinea-Bissau require more assistance. Previous investigations have not resulted in prosecutions because of the strong connections between criminal networks and government officials. To strengthen reformers, an internationally mandated mission of foreign experts in investigation, prosecution, and judicial issues should be based in Bissau to provide direct and sustained technical assistance to local counterparts. International experts would provide not only capacity to uphold the law, but might also provide a boost of morale to local reformers who face political pressure and intimidation to delay their work or simply self-censor. Such a concept has been advanced previously in Guinea-Bissau. Coordination meetings between the CPLP, ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations in September 2011 openly discussed detailing Brazilian and Portuguese legal experts and administrators to Bissau to train and support local counterparts.<sup>81</sup>

An initiative in Guatemala run by the United Nations but sanctioned by the national legislature called the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) offers a potentially useful precedent. CICIG has contributed to a marked improvement in investigations and prosecutions of major crimes in government as well as many administrative and legal reforms. Following Guatemala's long civil war that ended in 1996, the country endured staggeringly high-levels of official corruption and criminal and political violence, much of it perpetrated by former rebels who had infiltrated or coopted government agencies. This was further aggravated by Guatemala's role in the inter-American cocaine trade, in which large quantities of drugs and drug revenues were flowing through the country. The country's homicide rate was among the highest in the world. CICIG was established explicitly to target the interference of government offices and agencies by organized criminal groups, which was a root cause of the prevailing violence and corruption. Launched in 2007, CICIG's success has led to multiple extensions. Since its inception, it has conducted numerous investigations, arrests, prosecutions, trainings, and legal reforms. Former ministers, a police chief, a top counternarcotics official, an attorney general,

and many other politically and economically powerful individuals have been removed from office for impropriety or arrested and charged with various crimes.<sup>82</sup> CICIG has also developed a reputation for credibility and neutrality—some investigations have exonerated high-profile individuals believed to have been behind killings, trafficking, or other crimes. Additionally, dozens of prosecutors and investigators have been trained and numerous police officers have been vetted, resulting in the dismissal of more than 2,000 deemed unfit for service due to links to corruption. New laws regarding organized crime, arms and ammunition, criminal prosecution, and plea bargaining have all been strengthened or passed.<sup>83</sup> A similarly-styled mission for Guinea-Bissau could be mandated by the UN with strong support from the African Union, the CPLP, and ECOWAS. Detailees could be drawn from African states, Lusophone countries, and Europe so as to forestall any accusations of bias. Indeed, the 186 member CICIG team comprises a mix of nearly two dozen nationalities.

Such missions are highly relevant to the challenges posed by narco-states and transnational organized crime across Africa. While peacekeeping operations have become the default instrument for dealing with state failure or conflict, a battalion of peacekeepers is not the way to deal with shadowy criminal networks or the pervasive cooptation of state officials and institutions by trafficking networks. Narco-states and those suffering from deep penetration by criminal networks require multilateral missions with technical expertise relevant to reforming legal frameworks and penal codes, tax administration, corporate registries and financial regulations, and modern investigative techniques to build and prosecute challenging criminal cases. To be sure, these missions will require protection from violence and intimidation. They also require a strong mandate and consistent political support from a respected international body and are often most effective when sanctioned by the national legislature, convention, or similarly representative entity.

Members of these missions can achieve short-term gains while fostering self-sustaining reforms. For instance, the CICIG in Guatemala has worked closely with vetted law enforcement units and prosecutors to make immediate advances in major cases, including against once “untouchable” individuals with powerful political connections. Other elements of CICIG have focused on advanced training and reforming tax administration and legal codes. Most importantly, the presence of international counterparts working side-by-side with local law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and civil servants can dispel the disillusionment and fear bred by deeply entrenched cultures of impunity that are among the most pernicious challenges in narco-states and similar contexts.<sup>84</sup> The work of CICIG has also changed citizens’ perceptions of the government by prosecuting cases of official corruption as well as exonerating some leaders from suspected foul play. In other words, such initiatives have widespread impacts not only on transnational crime but on reestablishing good governance and government legitimacy.

## **Pressuring Spoilers**

Additional means of pressure will be needed to encourage cooperation and deter attempts to spoil peacebuilding efforts. In the wake of the April 2012 military coup d'état, targeted financial sanctions and travel bans were instituted against key military leaders by the United Nations, the European Union,

the African Union, and ECOWAS. Unfortunately, the application of such measures has been spotty, particularly within ECOWAS countries. Reports that General Indjai, the head of Guinea-Bissau's armed forces, traveled to Mali and Côte d'Ivoire in July 2012 and again to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal in March 2013 undermine the effects of such measures and the credibility of ECOWAS more generally.<sup>85</sup> ECOWAS must apply these measures more rigorously. Moreover, given Guinea-Bissau's membership in the West African Central Bank, ECOWAS should be able to investigate the financial assets of key leaders in Guinea-Bissau, who likely hold assets and accounts in The Gambia, Senegal, and elsewhere in the region. Nor should such measures focus solely on military officers, since certain civilian leaders and organizations have also played prominent roles in destabilizing Guinea-Bissau.

An international commission of inquiry or group of experts should also be launched to investigate the string of assassinations that took place in 2009, including of the president, the chief of staff of the armed forces, and several leading politicians. This initiative is long overdue, given the steady string of mysterious killings that have triggered crises in Guinea-Bissau. The commission or group of experts would require a strong mandate supported by ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations to conduct work in Guinea-Bissau and around the region. It should also publicly issue independent evidence-based reports of their findings, including identifying military and civilian leaders and organizations that have intentionally contributed to violence, corruption, or instability. Announcement of such an initiative—and the potential accountability it could bring—may force spoilers in Guinea-Bissau to recalculate their strategies of intransigence and potentially induce more cooperation with reform efforts.

Indeed, the April 2013 arrest of Na Tchuto and subsequent indictment of Indjai was followed by a surge in negotiations and compromises by military leaders to advance the political transition and improve cooperation with international actors to combat drug trafficking.<sup>86</sup> By May 2013, parliament, including the PAIGC, adopted a new transitional pact creating a more inclusive transitional government and scheduled national elections for November 2013.

## **Empowering Civil Society and Independent Media**

Guinea-Bissau's emerging democratic institutions, civil society, and independent media are another area in need of support. Remarkably, they have proven to be a resilient and influential force in the country. Yet, they are facing growing intimidation and violence from military and political leaders who resent the attention these independent outlets generate. International actors, particularly ECOWAS through its current political and ECOMIB military mission in the country, must do more to protect these groups, which are under increasing threat. Attacks, intimidation, or baseless legal action targeting human rights and civil society activists as well as journalists must be publicly condemned by leaders of all segments of Bissau-Guinean society. Laws should be passed to criminalize the targeting of journalists and in the event of violations, obligate investigations that include independent and international actors. The government must also cease the use of recently purchased equipment to identify and limit community radio transmissions.

There are several sophisticated and well-established nonprofit organizations that track human and civil rights, monitor government accountability and integrity, support entrepreneurship, and improve civic participation and access to government. Further investments in building the capacity of these groups are needed. Meanwhile, technical training and equipment to radio and print journalists can expand their reach and engagement with the population. Equally important will be networking all these actors to scale up their effectiveness and collectively resist spoilers and any intimidation. Supporting conferences of civil society groups, media, and government reformers will exponentially expand their efforts and improve their resilience.

## **Harmonizing International Approaches**

Unfortunately, instituting reforms in Guinea-Bissau has been severely complicated by the fact that many of Guinea-Bissau's oldest and closest neighbors and partners enjoy low credibility in the country. In the case of the CPLP and ECOWAS, long-running disagreements have sidetracked the efforts of major organizations and bilateral partners working to stabilize the country. Meanwhile, Angola's unilateral military assistance mission combined with its massive investments in the extractive industry inevitably made it a lightning rod for claims of foreign meddling and favoritism for specific factions.

In reality, bilateral and multilateral partners can each provide different leverage to advance stability and reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau. The CPLP has been closest to the largest political party, the PAIGC, and is widely respected among Bissau-Guineans, providing it the credibility to bring Guinea-Bissau's most influential political organization into a consensus-based dialogue without sacrificing face among PAIGC's supporters and the population. However, the CPLP has no real budget, expertise, or mandate to lead a stabilization mission. For its part, ECOWAS has a larger presence in Bissau, a more robust framework for managing peace and security in West Africa, broader legitimacy across the region, and more resources to bear. Additionally, it enjoys good connections with Guinea-Bissau's military leadership, though many Bissau-Guineans distrust the organization because of Senegal's support of President Vieira during the 1998-1999 civil war and ECOMIB's weak reputation for preventing human rights abuses.

What is needed is a process operating at three levels to foster a shared international approach to Guinea-Bissau's stabilization challenge. First, an International Contact Group for Guinea-Bissau should be revitalized. Such a Contact Group has existed in the past and was proposed in the month following the April 2012 coup d'état but has remained underutilized. It should be revived and restructured to include a strong role for countries with fewer existing interests in Guinea-Bissau, such as non-CPLP or non-ECOWAS states, to create a more trusted venue for constructively reconciling differences and formulating a shared international vision for stabilizing Guinea-Bissau.

A multilateral effort will also be needed within Guinea-Bissau to coordinate a multitrack stabilization vision through implementation. As the organization with the largest staff, budget, consistent presence,

and credibility among both domestic actors and international partners, the UN mission in Guinea-Bissau is best placed to enhance on-the-ground cooperation and coordination among international actors. In continuous operation since 1999—first as the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and then as the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau since 2009—the UN mission is in fact mandated to fulfill that coordinating role among the CPLP, ECOWAS, and the AU. Some progress was achieved on this front in late 2012 and early 2013, as exemplified by the joint assessment missions in Guinea-Bissau conducted by the five major multilateral organizations: the AU, the CPLP, ECOWAS, the EU, and the UN.<sup>87</sup> Supported by an expanded Contact Group that provides a clearer and mutually agreed upon vision of stability in Guinea-Bissau, the UN mission should be able to more adequately fulfill this role. Additionally, it will directly support peacebuilding through the training, technical assistance, small-project funding, and other activities it has regularly launched.

The CPLP and ECOWAS will each have vital roles given their points of contact, leverage, and unique interests in the country. ECOWAS is the natural multilateral organization through which to channel most engagements with the government of Guinea-Bissau and stabilization activities. As a member state, Guinea-Bissau is a signatory to ECOWAS protocols on democratic governance, its framework for the free movement of peoples and goods within the region, and code of conduct for the armed forces. Guinea-Bissau uses the West African franc as its currency and is a member of the West African Central Bank. It also has strong political, economic, and military ties to other ECOWAS members, and the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council has experience in managing conflict and crises in the region. ECOWAS, however, needs to more firmly uphold its own protocols and democratic norms in Guinea-Bissau and commit to a broad-based stabilization effort in the country. The Contact Group and UN mission should work to ensure such obligations are met. Moreover, the ECOMIB stabilization force in Guinea-Bissau should be more assertive in preventing human rights abuses or criminality among the Bissau-Guinean security forces. ECOWAS should also ensure that there are adequate oversight and accountability mechanisms in place to ease the high levels of mistrust of ECOMIB prevailing among most Bissau-Guineans as well as to prevent West African troops from being drawn into trafficking and other criminal activities. For its part, the CPLP can use its strong connections to many influential actors in Guinea-Bissau, particularly the largest political party, the PAIGC, to support a political reform process based on genuine dialogue, compromise, and consensus. Working in coordination on a shared vision is in ECOWAS's and the CPLP's interests, as this will rebuild their legitimacy and credibility in the country as well as in the region and internationally.

Lastly, multilateral actors must be wary of any destabilizing and opaque investment activity in Guinea-Bissau. Rich in natural resources, including minerals, timber, fisheries, and likely oil, Guinea-Bissau is a choice target for unscrupulous actors who often seek to take advantage of a fragile state with extremely weak institutions and politicians willing to compromise the public's interest for short-term gain. Concerns have already been raised within Guinea-Bissau about Angolan and Chinese investments and activities. Regardless of their merits, they have become fodder for pre-existing political disputes and competition without contributing to any benefits in Guinea-Bissau. The Contact Group, the

UN mission, ECOWAS, the CPLP, and others should all work toward ensuring that the government proceeds deliberatively and through a transparent process when evaluating large-scale extractive industry investments. Technical assistance should be made available to ensure that best practices are applied to minimize corruption and optimize accountability and broad-based benefits.

## CONCLUSION

Guinea-Bissau has been roiled by increasingly frequent and complex crises. The sensationalism of these crises risks distracting attention from the underlying institutional dysfunctions in Guinea-Bissau that are driving this instability. A system marked by the centralization of unaccountable political power has spawned many other drivers of instability, including a deeply politicized security sector, rampant illicit trafficking of high-value narcotics, and emerging challenges such as ethnic divides. Amid this fray, foreign states and multilateral organizations have often exacerbated instability by neglecting the need for institutional reforms in the country while favoring short-term solutions that maintain their leverage and interest. The consequences of such worsening instability have not been limited to Guinea-Bissau. Its problems have become intertwined with other militant and terrorist activity in West Africa and have fueled a drug trade across the region that is threatening security, development, and good governance.

Given the degree of volatility and polarization within Guinea-Bissau, stabilizing this country cannot be done through domestic means alone. Likewise, it is inaccurate to characterize Guinea-Bissau's crises simply as a series of domestic problems that are now spilling across borders. Guinea-Bissau's predicament is in many ways a symptom of a broader transnational threat. International partners must therefore commit to a more strategic and unified stabilization effort in the country as part of this transnational response. Persistent and integrated interventions are needed to foster reconciliation and overcome polarization, reform the political system so that it is more balanced and accountable, to depoliticize and professionalize the armed forces, and target transnational drug networks through enhanced interdiction as well as by building the capacity of Guinea-Bissau's judicial and law enforcement and related regulatory frameworks. The traction and sustainability of any reform effort will be contingent on the involvement and strength of Guinea-Bissau's emerging civil society organizations, media sector, and democratic institutions. They should be consistently strengthened, protected, and included in stabilization activities.

Guinea-Bissau's experience with drug trafficking should be a warning to the rest of Africa. While no other African country has yet exhibited the same level of drug-fueled disputes, governance setbacks, or general instability, the continuing spread and evolution of drug trafficking and manufacturing in Africa raises the distinct possibility that other countries on the continent face a fate not dissimilar to Guinea-Bissau's. The country's difficulties should be a clear example that drug trafficking, even transshipment between supplier and user countries, has significant consequences and that prevention is critical since reversing such trends is enormously difficult and often requires years of work with substantial international support. Intervening to stabilize Guinea-Bissau, thus, should be viewed as a first essential step toward stemming a growing and complex problem across the continent.

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